


The Impending Peril

HENRY BROWN, D. D.

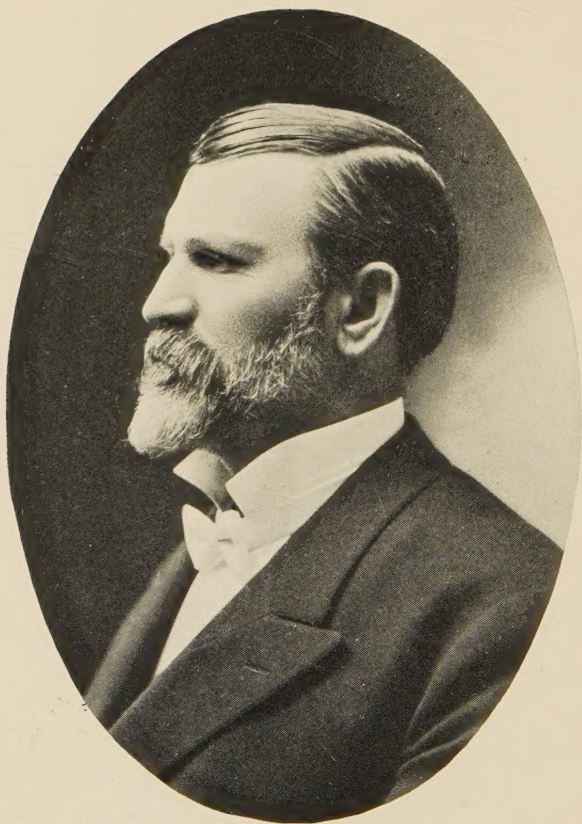
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THE IMPENDING PERIL
OR
METHODISM AND AMUSEMENTS



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THE IMPENDING PERIL

OR

Methodism and Amusements

A COMPILATION OF
TESTIMONY, RULES, SPEECHES, AND ARTICLES
ON
THE AMUSEMENT QUESTION
WITH
AN ARGUMENT IN REVIEW

By

HENRY BROWN, D. D.

PRESIDING ELDER

SPOKANE DISTRICT, COLUMBIA RIVER CONFERENCE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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PARAGRAPH 248.

In cases of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, signing petitions in favor of granting license for the sale of intoxicating liquors, becoming bondsmen for persons engaged in such traffic, renting property as a place in or on which to manufacture or sell intoxicating liquors, DANCING, PLAYING AT GAMES OF CHANCE, ATTENDING THEATERS, HORSE RACES, CIRCUSES, DANCING PARTIES, OR PATRONIZING DANCING SCHOOLS, OR TAKING SUCH OTHER AMUSEMENTS AS ARE OBVIOUSLY OF MISLEADING OR QUESTIONABLE MORAL TENDENCY, or disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church—first let private reproof be given by the Pastor or Leader, and if there be an acknowledgment of the fault, and proper humiliation, the person may be borne with. On the second offense the Pastor or Leader may take one or two discreet members of the Church. On a third offense let him be brought to trial, and if found guilty, and there be no sign of real humiliation, he shall be expelled.

PREFACE.



THE Methodist Episcopal Church is in imminent peril!

All Methodism is in danger!

Indeed our common Christianity is in jeopardy from the universal prevalence and insidious attacks of the forces of evil resident in, and emanating from, the popular amusements of the day.

Our Bishops in their "Episcopal Address" at the General Conference of 1900 gave recognition to this fact in the following words:

"Whoever watches the daily press can not miss the evidence of shameful degradation in the theater, the concert and dance-hall, and on the race course. And the tendency to great excess also in other forms of amusement can not escape attention. The seriousness of life seems largely forgotten, its opportunities of usefulness unoccupied, the vigilance necessary for righteousness relaxed, and the love of the passing world gaining in masterfulness. . . .

"The peril to the spiritual life of our people is im-

minent and incalculable. Lovers of pleasure are not likely to be lovers of God. The warrior must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life. Without simplicity, moderation, and purity in his pleasures, the Christian can not resist the forces that create an age of triflers and sensualists."

In the name of God, and for the sake of our holy religion, we arraign some of the more powerful of these institutions of evil before the bar of a God-fearing Christian judgment, and in the following pages present a consensus of opinion, and a discussion of methods of action, relative to these enemies of truth and righteousness; and may the living God give victory to the right!

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PART FIRST.

ACCUSATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE THEATER.

"The theater was from the very first
The favorite haunt of sin, though honest men,
Some very honest, wise and worthy men,
Maintained it might be turned to good account;
And so, perhaps, it might, but never was,—
From first to last it was an evil place."

—Pollok.

It is the fashion in the so-called "polite society" to sneer at any attempt on the part of individual or Church to expose the character and tendency of the theater, or to oppose it in any way.

We are told that any expression of hostility to the playhouse is an unmistakable evidence and confession of weakness; that "to the pure all things are pure;" that if the theater does possess some objectionable features, it is not as bad as many other things; that it is an old-established institution, too powerful to be overthrown; and that if it is not what it ought to be, it is the duty of

good men and women to turn in and assist in elevating it to a higher moral plane. Those who denounce it are derided as Puritanical and narrow-minded fanatics.

In reply to all this we shall now introduce the testimony of certain well-known characters, men and women from different walks in life, whose words can not be lightly set aside.

In order that we may know something of the reputation of the theater in the early centuries of the Christian era let us hear what some of the distinguished men of the Church in the post-apostolic age have to say.

TERTULLIAN (160-240).

"Stage plays are the pomps of the devil, against which we have renounced in our baptism." He further says: "The playhouse is the devil's church."

CYPRIAN, OF AFRICA (200-258).

(In a letter to a friend.)

"Cyprian to Eucratius, his brother, Health: Your love and esteem have induced you, dearest brother, to consult me as to what I think of a player among you, who still continues to instruct others in that infamous and miserable art which he himself hath learnt. You ask whether he should be allowed the continuance of

Christian communion. I think it very inconsistent with the majesty of God and the rules of the Gospel that the modesty and honor of the Church should be defiled by so base and infamous a contagion. . . . Therefore, if possible, recover him from this depravity and infamy to the way of innocence and to the hope of life, that he may be content with a parsimonious but salutary maintenance from the Church."

CYRIL, OF JERUSALEM (315-386).

"The devil's pomp which we renounce in baptism are those spectacles or plays in theaters, and all other vanities of this kind, from which the holy man of God, desiring to be freed, saith, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.'"

To forestall the objections that may possibly be urged, that these are exceptional cases, and do not represent the general attitude of the Christian Church toward the theater of that day, we will here introduce a statement from Milner, the Church historian. Commenting on Cyprian's letter concerning the "player," he says:

"The decision of Cyprian is doubtless that which piety and good sense would unite to dictate in the case. A player was ever an infamous character at Rome, and was looked upon as incapable of filling any of the offices of state. . . . If this was the judgment of sober pagans, we need not wonder that the purity of

Christianity would not even suffer such characters to be admitted into the bosom of the Church at all."

But some one may suggest that possibly this Christian historian had an exaggerated idea of the evil character of the "player" and his art in those distant times. Very well; let us introduce another historian who can not be accused of any favorable leaning toward the stricter views of the Church. He is describing the state of Rome under the reign of Honorius:

GIBBON, "DECLINE AND FALL."

"The tragic and comic muse of the Romans, who seldom aspired beyond the imitation of Attic genius, had been almost totally silent since the fall of the Republic; and their place was unworthily occupied by licentious farce, effeminate music, and splendid pageantry. . . . The vast and magnificent theaters of Rome were filled by three thousand female dancers, and by three thousand singers, with the masters of the respective choruses."

He throws further light on the character of the theater in those far-away days by publishing the Pastoral Letter of Julian the Apostate, the famous emperor who renounced Christianity and endeavored to re-establish paganism. The letter

is to the pagan priests, and in it the emperor says:

"The priest of the gods should never be seen in theaters."

I submit to any fair-minded advocate of the theater that if the theatrical representations of Julian's day were unfit for the eyes and ears of his pagan priests, then surely we may safely accept the foregoing testimony of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Cyril.

Possibly there may be those who entertain the opinion that in the progress of the later centuries the theater may have experienced a change for the better. Let us come down to the eighteenth century and introduce the testimony of some well-known men.

JOHN WESLEY.

"The theater is the sink of all profaneness and debauchery."

JOHN WITHERSPOON.

(One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.)

"If the stage be a proper method of promoting the interests of religion, then is Satan's kingdom divided

against itself, which he is more cunning than to suffer it to be. For whatever debate there be, whether good men may attend the theater, there can be no question at all that no openly vicious man is an enemy to it, and that the far greater part of them do passionately love it."

But if these testimonies are unsatisfactory because they are the opinions of clergymen, suppose we hear what a celebrated infidel of that time has to say:

ROUSSEAU.

"It [the stage] is the art of dissimulation; of assuming a foreign character, and of appearing differently from what a man really is; of flying into a passion without a cause, and of saying what he does not think as naturally as if he really did; in a word, of forgetting himself to personate others. . . . Where would be the prudent mother who would dare to carry her daughter to this dangerous school? And what respectable woman would not think herself dishonored by going there?"

Let us now come down into the nineteenth century, and hear what the author of "Camille" has to say to a friend.

DUMAS.

"You do not take your daughter to see my play. You are right. Let me say, once for all, you must

not take your daughter to the theater. It is not merely the work that is immoral, it is the place. Whenever we paint men, there must be a grossness that can not be placed before all eyes; and whenever the theater is elevated and loyal, it can live only by using the color of truth. The theater being the picture or satire of the passions and social manners, it must be immoral—the passions and social manners themselves being immoral.”

It may be objected, however, that it is not the ancient Roman theater, nor yet the French theater, but the modern cosmopolitan institution which we have under consideration.

Very well; we will bring forward a number of witnesses who have lived and filled a large place in the public eye within the last seventy-five years.

We will begin with the father of American Unitarianism.

WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

“In its present state the theater deserves no encouragement. It is an accumulation of immoral influences. It has nourished intemperance and all vice. . . . How often is it disgraced by monstrous distortions of human nature, and still more disgraced by profaneness, coarseness, indelicacy, low wit, such as no woman worthy of the name can hear without a blush, and no man can take pleasure in without self-

degradation. Is it possible that a Christian and a refined people can resort to theaters where exhibitions of dancing are given fit only for brothels, and where the most licentious class in the community throng unconcealed to tempt and destroy? That the theater should be suffered to exist in its present degradation is a reproach to the community."

BISHOP COXE.

(*Episcopalian.*)

"All that theory can adduce in defense of a possible drama vanishes before the gross sensuality of the actual stage. The voice of Christian antiquity denounces as anti-Christian the whole system of the playhouse, and the very heathen lash, as obscene and shameful, scenes which are exhibited to young men and maidens in New York and all over the land. 'I go to the theater myself,' said a young man to me lately, 'but I thought the devil himself must have laughed when he saw a communicant of the Church there.'"

THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

"One of the most celebrated actresses of this time informed a friend of mine that she only enters a theater to enact her part, and has very little conversation with her own profession.

"A converted actor once said to me while passing a playhouse in which he had often performed, 'Behind those curtains lies Sodom.' Although sorely pressed to return to his old pursuits, he said he would sooner starve than go on the stage again."

HERRICK JOHNSON, D. D.

"The ideal stage is out of the question. It is out of the question just as pure, chaste, public human nudity is out of the question; that is, with men and women as they are now constituted.

"The nature of theatrical performances, the essential demands of the stage, the character of the plays, and the constitution of human nature, make it impossible that the theater should exist, save under a law of degeneracy. Its trend is downward. Its centuries of history tell just this one story. The actual stage of to-day—the stage as it now exists—is a moral abomination."

JOSEPH COOK.

"The slave-hound is not more to be detested than the actress of a loathsome play."

SAM JONES.

"As I look on the bill-boards in the various cities of this country and see the nude form, in all kinds of vulgar attitudes, and realize that these scenes are enacted before our boys and girls on the stage, I do not wonder that bawdy-houses are multiplying so that the citizens of the country are, by legal enactments, setting apart whole sections of cities to them, and the daily newspapers are literally filled on every page with social and domestic scandals.

"How can our people feast on such immorality, and not become vile! . . . There seems to be a morbid appetite throughout all society for the vulgar. Every novel must have somewhere a scene of seduc-

tion and adultery to make it go. Every stage performance must have in it some scene, at least a prominent insinuation, of ruined virtue."

BISHOP JOHN H. VINCENT, D. D.

"Is not the theater a product of and a response to the dramatic instinct in man? It may be all that, and even then be all wrong. The whole question depends upon the legitimate uses of the dramatic taste and the dramatic power. What may be wholesome in rhetorical and oratorical expression, may, with spectacular accompaniments, produce overwrought imaginations and do damage to both the intellectual and moral elements in man. . . . The argument from 'dramatic instinct' is of little weight with thoughtful men, for they know that the capacity itself may find abundant exercise in other and worthier fields without employing the dangerous devices of the stage. Indeed, there seems to be an irreconcilable antagonism between spiritual sensitiveness and dramatic entertainments.

"As a faithful pastor says: 'A high spiritual tone pervading the community would empty many of the seats in our theaters, proving that there is an utter lack of harmony between right feeling toward God and a taste for ordinary exhibitions of the stage.'"

DR. TALMAGE.

"'It is only ten o'clock,' said the officer of the law, as we got into the carriage for the midnight exploration; 'it is only ten o'clock, and it is too early to see the places that we wish to see, for the theaters have not yet let out.' I said, 'What do you mean by

that?' 'Well,' he said, 'the places of iniquity are not in full blast until the people have time to arrive from the theaters.'"

DR. J. M. BUCKLEY.

"It may be said, 'We do not hold that it is right to see a vile play because the "Pilgrim's Progress" is right, but we do hold that it is right to discriminate, and to see the "Pilgrim's Progress."' But the conclusive answer to this is, 'Not if by so doing you throw your whole influence in favor of an institution whose general effect is pernicious.'

"By putting the argument that way you show that you ignore the duty of denying yourself for the sake of your Christian influence. . . . The theater is not to be judged as though representations were isolated things, like books. It is an institution. Reading has no significance in the way of moral influence. To say of a man, 'He reads,' indicates nothing. To the limited circle who know what he reads, the fact of his reading certain books has a moral meaning. But the theater is an institution with a very pronounced character. Theater-going means one thing in the estimation of the public. He who goes to the theater throws his influence in favor of the theater as a whole. He may say, 'I discriminate; I go to see Shakespeare;' but all who know him will say, 'He goes to the theater.'"

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

"If you would pervert the taste—go to the theater.

"If you would imbibe false views—go to the theater.

"If you would efface as speedily as possible all qualms of conscience—go to the theater.

"If you would put yourself irreconcilably against the spirit of virtue and religion—go to the theater.

"If you would be infected with each particular vice in the catalogue of depravity—go to the theater.

"Let parents who wish to make their children weary of home and quiet domestic enjoyments take them to the theater.

"If it be desirable for the young to loathe industry and didactic reading, and burn for fierce excitements, and seek them by stealth or through pilferings if need be—then send them to the theater. It is notorious that the bill of fare at the temples of pleasure is made up to the taste of the lower appetites; that low comedy, and lower farce, running into absolute obscenity, are the only means of filling a house.

"Theaters which should exhibit nothing but the classic drama, would exhibit it to empty seats.

"They must be corrupt to live. . . . It is notorious that the theater is the door to all the sinks of iniquity. It is through this infamous place that the young learn to love those vicious associates and practices to which, else, they would have been strangers. Half the victims of the gallows and of the penitentiary will tell you that these 'schools for morals' were to them the gate of debauchery, the porch of pollution, the vestibule of the very house of death."

It may be well to call in another class of witnesses, editors for instance, and see how they regard the theater. Possibly from their angle

of vision it may not appear so objectionable as it does when seen from the pulpit.

THE CENTURY.

(*Quoted by Dr. Buckley in the Christian Advocate, October 10, 1895.*)

"Nobody with any knowledge of the facts will deny that the American theater, considered merely as a rational means of entertainment, without reference to its relations to literature and art, is in a most forlorn and debased condition. Tragedy, high comedy, the historical and romantic drama, have been virtually banished from the stage or find few worthy interpreters, and have been replaced to a large extent by worthless melodramas, the extravagant buffooneries of so-called farce comedies, or the feverish and unwholesome society play, in which the most vicious topics are discussed openly under the pretense of solving social problems."

THE EPWORTH HERALD.

(*Editorial, January 31, 1903.*)

SHUN THE THEATER.

"We have often given that advice. Evidence accumulates that the theater is a menace to morality, and a positive hindrance to the growth of the spiritual life. We do not write for people of the world. Our reasoning will not appeal to them. This is in-

tended for the young Christian's eye. You, of all persons, should shun the theater.

"1. Because the atmosphere of the playhouse is materialistic and sensuous.

"2. Because the tendency is downward. It is the experience of confirmed theater-goers that one glides almost imperceptibly from a love of the dignified and pure to a relish for that which is frivolous and gross.

"3. Because actors and actresses, as a class, are persons of questionable morals. Not all persons upon the stage are impure; but it is almost the universal confession of persons who have abandoned the stage life for the Christian life that their former surroundings were not friendly to virtue.

"4. Because in attending the theater you associate with persons a vast majority of whom are not Christians. You are thus compelled to see situations and listen to lines which were intended for the entertainment of the worldly. Many of the plays contain suggestions which are far beneath the standards of morality which your Master taught. Can your spiritual life be nourished in such an atmosphere?

"5. Because of your influence. If you yourself can go to the theater without receiving moral taint, some who will be influenced by your action can not. They will not be able to resist the bad influences of the place, and will speedily drift into a love for that which is sensational and immoral, to the ultimate loss of their souls.

"6. Because the theater is next-door neighbor to the wine-room, the gambler's table, and the familiar haunts of the dissolute.

"7. Because prosperity in the theater means ad-

versity in the Church. The two are opposites. They can not flourish together. When the church is empty the playhouse is full. When the church is full the playhouse is empty. In the theater ministers are caricatured, Church members are put in situations which hold them up to scorn, 'old-fashioned piety' is ridiculed, and crowds laugh uproariously at representations of the inconsistencies of the children of God. For a Christian to give his presence and money in support of such an institution is to write himself down a traitor to his Master and the cause for which He died."

THE DAILY OREGONIAN.

(Editorial on the death of Lawrence Barrett, in the Oregonian of Portland, Oregon, March 23, 1891.)

"The death of Lawrence Barrett is not only a great loss to the higher walks of the American stage, but it is a loss to the needed popular education of higher dramatic taste that is in danger of death before the increasing rage for farce and burlesque. . . . Compared with the stage of twenty-five years ago, the outlook of the legitimate American drama, whether in tragedy or comedy, is not encouraging. There is talent enough, but the taste of the country has become so corrupted that men and women of talent for the stage seek fame through farce and burlesque because it is the shortest road to pecuniary reward. As a consequence, the number of actors who are artists is decreasing, and the number of actors who are exponents of histrionic horse-play, and broad-grin buffoonery, and roaring farce is increasing. . . . Burlesque and farce teach nothing, touch no depth of

human nature, but foster its shallow, silly side. . . . For the sake of American manners, thought, speech, and taste, it is a pity, therefore, that the legitimate artistic drama of human nature and society is dying before the growing passion of a frantic, money-making age for mere amusement, horse-play, and leg drama."

That the atmosphere of the theater is deadly there can be no question when men and women closely identified with the institution testify to its corrupting influence.

The following is the testimony of an eminent English dramatic critic:

CLEMENT SCOTT.

"If any one I loved insisted upon going on the stage contrary to my advice, I should be terrified for the future, hopeless for the endurance of our affection, or even of our friendship; for the stage life, according to my experience, has a tendency to deaden the finer feelings and crush the inner nature of men and women; to substitute artificiality and hollowness for sincerity and truth. . . . I speak rather of and to the hundreds of young people, especially of the opposite sex, who have an unhealthy craving for matters theatrical. It is really impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession. Everything is against her."

It may be that all that has gone before is insufficient to convince the average theater-goer

that the theater is a dangerous institution, but the most obtuse or perverse mind ought to yield when prominent actors and actresses give their testimony against it. The following is taken from *Zion's Herald*, February 19, 1902:

ELEANORA DUSE.

"It is no less a person than Eleanora Duse, said to be almost without a rival as a dramatic actress, who has just made public her opinion of the stage and its representatives: 'I must escape from the slavery of stage life. That is no life at all. I assure you it is hell—downright hell. Of many of my companions on the boards I can not think but with feelings of loathing and suspicion. Most of the players I meet are a contemptible lot.'"

From the *Daily Spokesman-Review* of Spokane, Washington, November 5, 1902, the following is taken:

J. H. STODDART.

"J. H. Stoddart, the veteran actor, now playing at the Spokane Theater in 'The Bonnie Brier Bush,' is enjoying this, his first visit to Spokane, immensely. During yesterday he and his daughter, Miss Mary, viewed the falls, took trolley rides into the suburbs, and returned to their hotel in the early afternoon, where Mr. Stoddart told stories of how the 'Black Crook,' as played at Niblo's Garden forty years ago, dealt the first severe blow to the legitimate Shakespearean drama. . . . One reason that the actor of to-day can not cope with those of old

in the particular fields selected by the latter is that, ever since the days of the 'Black Crook' in Niblo's Garden, the stage has drifted constantly towards the frivolous—the farce comedy and the comic opera."

And here are some more witnesses—actors and actresses—who certainly are competent to speak concerning the character of the modern stage.

MADAME JANAUŠCHEK.

"I am glad when fortune gives me an opportunity by my advice to keep any good girl from a life which, nine times out of ten, is one of misery or of aimless selfishness. The best thing for a young girl to do . . . is to keep away from the theater, and do anything but go upon the stage."

W. C. MACREADY.

"None of my children shall ever, with my consent, or on any pretense, enter a theater, or have any visiting connection with actors or actresses."

EDWIN BOOTH.

"I never permit my wife or daughter to witness a play without previously ascertaining its character. . . . While the theater is permitted to be a mere shop for gain, open to every huckster of immoral gimcracks, there is no other way to discriminate between the pure and base than through the experience of others."

FRANCES KEMBLE.

"A business which is incessant excitement and fictitious emotion seems to me unworthy of man; a busi-

ness which is public exhibition is unworthy of a woman. Never have I presented myself before an audience without a shrinking feeling of reluctance, or withdrawn from their presence without thinking the excitement I had undergone unhealthy, and the personal exhibition odious."

A MINISTER AT THE THEATER.

How the world regards the minister of the gospel who attends the theater is told by "Quaero" in *Zion's Herald*, July 16, 1902:

"Rev. Polhemus H. Swift preached on the 'Ethics of Vacation' on a recent Sunday. He told of a preacher who came into the pleasant but guileful city of New York on his vacation. 'Here,' said the preacher man, 'I am far from home, and they who go about the streets and into places of amusement will know me not. Hence I will betake myself to the theater and enjoy myself in peace.'

"A few days later the preacher was accosted on the train by a young man who said to him, 'Are you not a minister of the gospel?'

"The preacher acknowledged that he was. 'Did you not preach in my home town, the village of —, last Sunday night?' the young man asked. The preacher answered that he had. 'Ah!' said the young man, 'and I saw you last Wednesday night in the fifth seat from me at the theater. I never want to hear you preach again, for I have no confidence in you, even though I am not a professing Christian.'"

CHAPTER II.

THE DANCE.

"Round all the confines of the yielding waist
The strangest hand may wander undisplaced."

—Byron.

THE dance is another institution of long standing. Whatever changes of form or outward expression ^{of outward thought} it may have undergone in modern times, it is safe to say that it has experienced no change of character since the children of the wicked danced in the days of Job, or since, through the dancing of the pretty daughter of a wicked woman, John the Baptist lost his head.

Men and women of all ages condemn the dance. Listen:

PETRARCH.

"The dance is the spur of lust—a circle of which the devil himself is the center. Many that use it have come dishonest home, most indifferent, none better."

CICERO.

"No man in his senses will dance."

TERTULLIAN.

"If Christians were found in the assemblies of the dancers, it proved them to be no longer true Christians."

DR. A. BARNES.

"No child dances into heaven, but many a one dances into hell."

DR. HOWARD CROSBY.

"Three-fourths of the abandoned girls of New York were ruined by dancing."

D. L. MOODY.

"I would as leave go out into the street and eat mud as to dance."

C. H. SPURGEON.

"When I hear of a modern dance I have an uncomfortable feeling about the throat, as I recall that a dance cost the head of the preacher, John the Baptist."

BISHOP HOPKINS.

(Episcopal—Vermont.)

"No ingenuity can make it consistent with the covenant of baptism. . . . I have shown that dancing is chargeable with waste of time, the interruption of useful study, the indulgence of personal vanity, and the premature incitement of the passions."

BISHOP COBB.

(Episcopal—Alabama.)

"The idea that the Episcopal Church favors dancing has floated much trash down upon her."

BISHOP COXE.

(Episcopal—New York.)

"The gross, debasing waltz would not be tolerated for another year if Christian mothers in our communion would only set their faces against it, and remove their daughters from its contaminations, and their sons from that contempt of womanhood and womanly modesty which it begets. Alas! that women professing to follow Christ and godliness should not rally for the honor of their sex and drive these shameless dances from society! . . .

"The lasciviousness of dances too commonly tolerated in our times, is so disgraceful to the age, and so irreconcilable with the Gospel of Christ, that I feel it my duty to the souls of my flock to warn those who run to the same excess of riot in these things, that they come not to the holy table. Classes preparing for confirmation are informed that I will not lay hands, knowingly, on any one who is not prepared to renounce such things. Let all choose deliberately whom they will serve."

DR. TALMAGE.

"I want you to unite with me . . . in recognizing the fact that there is a dissolute dance. You know of what I speak. It is seen, not only in the low haunts of death, but in elegant mansions.

"It is the first step to eternal ruin for a great multitude of both sexes. You know, my friends, what postures and attitudes and figures are suggested of the devil. They who glide into the dissolute dance, glide over an inclined plane, and the dance is swifter and swifter, wilder and wilder, until with the speed of lightning they whirl off the edges of a decent life into a fiery future.

"This gate of hell swings across the Axminster of many a fine parlor, and across the ball-room of the summer watering-place.

"You have no right, my brother, my sister, you have no right to take an attitude to the sound of music which would be unbecoming in the absence of music.

"No Chickering Grand of city parlor, or fiddle of mountain picnic, can consecrate that which God hath cursed."

BISHOP PIERCE.

(Methodist Episcopal Church, South.)

"Dram-drinkers and dancing Methodists, without prompt confession of wrong, deep humiliation, and solemn pledges never to repeat, will be, as they ought to be, cut off. The preachers, I trust, will cease to rely upon talking and coaxing, and let these old offenders know that the Church can not and will not tolerate these vices and fooleries.

"If it be said our young members will quit us and go to other Churches, I answer: Let them go! We lose nothing but members, and others gain nothing that a Church of Christ ought to have. For one, I say, any Church desiring such accessions is welcome to all the Methodists, so called, who can be bought off by the privilege of dancing."

HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(On "Polite Society.")

"One is respected, the other despised.

"One is polished, the other boorish.

"One is clean, the other filthy.

"Both are brainless, both are heartless, both are sensual.

"One class drinks champagne, the other bad whisky, but both live to drink.

"One class dances at Delmonico's, the other in dives, but both live to dance.

"One has been lifted to the top by our social system, the other has been kicked to the bottom."

ROMAN CATHOLIC.

(Plenary Council, Baltimore, May, 1867.)

"We consider it to be our duty to warn our people against those amusements which may easily become to them an occasion of sin, and especially against those fashionable dances, which, as at present carried on, are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest danger to morality."

SAM JONES.

(In "Quit Your Meanness.")

"There is no circumspect Christian who does not see to it that his feet are kept in the narrow way that leads from earth to heaven. A Methodist, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Catholic in a ball-room! Their feet that they have pledged should follow in the footsteps of Christ, are there cutting the pigeon-wing to music!

"Now what do you think of that?

"And hear this expression: They say, 'Well, our Church don't object to it.' Now I would say a very strong thing here—and I hope you will take it in the very spirit in which I say it, for I never said a kinder thing or a harder thing than that—you never shall hear

a truer thing. Wherever a Presbyterian, or a Methodist, or a Baptist, or a Christian, or a Congregationalist, or a Catholic says that their Church don't object to dancing, and theaters, and all such things as that, they could not tell a bigger lie if they would try in a hundred years! . . .

"Some places the devil goes to he never has anything to do himself. He puts his hands in his pockets, and goes around and gets members of the Church to run his devilment for him. They do his work cheaper for him than any other class. He does n't have to pay them, and they board themselves. In some towns the leading ball-room dude is a member of the Church—the fellow that gets them all up and runs the thing. . . .

"It is these worldly amusements that are sweeping over our homes and Churches, and paralyzing us, and making us to-day little better than a graveyard. That is it. I never saw a spiritual man in my life that would stand up and ask me, 'Do you think there is any harm in the dance?' Why don't you ask me if I think there is any harm in the prayer-meeting, or if I think there is any harm in family prayer. You know there is n't. And whenever you hear a fellow asking if there is any harm in a dance, you can reply, 'You lying old rascal, you know there is!' . . .

"That young lady says, 'I would join the Church, but I love to dance.' Well, young lady, go on. We will say that you go to two hundred balls. That's a big allowance, isn't it? And that you dance hundreds of sets. By and by you die without God and without hope, and down into the flames of despair you go forever; and as you walk the sulphurous streets of damnation you can tell them, 'I am in hell forever, it is true, but

I danced four hundred times, I did.' Now, won't that be a consolation?"

BISHOP VINCENT.

(In "*Better Not.*")

"And there is the dance. What shall we say of it? As little girls dance by themselves, or as schoolgirls by themselves dance in the gymnasium; as old people dance with old people at a wedding feast or under the shadow of trees at a harvest-home or picnic, what can one say against it? If no one danced but very young people or very old people, and if their use of the recreation were purely recreative, in broad daylight, and in the open air, and for a little time, it would be hard to find anything severely to condemn in it. Against such dancing we should not care to write, innocent as it would be in the children, and silly as it would be in the old. But the dance means more than these imply. It is not the rattle one hears in the neighborhood of a rattlesnake that he objects to. A child might play with it. The dance is the rattle, but the danger is in the fang and the poison. The dance can not be considered abstractly. It is a usage of society. Its associations and tendencies must come into the count. And one must not discriminate too critically nor carry his experiments too far where there lurks a real danger. The rattle may please a child, but, grasping the rattle, he may receive a deadly sting. . . .

"Why should such a large-minded man as Horace Bushnell speak of certain forms of the dance as 'contrived possibilities of license which belong to high society only when it runs low?' And why should one of the most fair-minded and earnest New England Congrega-

*He conducted activity
and a group collecting*

tional pastors say, 'Fashionable dances as now carried on are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest danger to millions?' . . .

"A Protestant minister of large experience and influence says that 'the round dance of fashionable society can not be participated in in the heat and glare of the ballroom, with the accessories of music and motion, with the close physical contact and the hot breaths on each other's cheek, without intoxicating the brain and setting the passions of the participants on fire. It is physiologically impossible—deny it who will! Any intelligent and honest physician will tell you so. I do not say that the participants know or are always conscious of the secret cause of their pleasurable excitement; but the fact remains the same. For these reasons, and more, I maintain that the modern dance is undermining the safeguards of modesty and virtue. . . .

"One can not wonder, if these statements and reasonings be correct, that Gail Hamilton with such vehemence proclaims concerning the dance that 'the thing in its very nature is unclean and can not be washed. The very pose of the parties suggests impurity.'

"And we can not dismiss this most disagreeable subject without giving the philosophy of a wise man who thinks clearly and writes forcibly. He says: 'It is no accident that the dance is what it is. It mingles the sexes in such closeness of personal approach and contact as, outside of the dance, is nowhere tolerated in respectable society. It does this under a complexity of circumstances that conspire to heighten the impropriety of it. It is evening, and the hour is late; there is the delicious and unconscious intoxication of music and motion in the blood; there is the strange, confusing sense of being

individually unobserved among so many, while yet the natural "noble shame" which guards the purity of man and woman alone together is absent,—such is the occasion; and still, hour after hour, the dance whirls its giddy kaleidoscope around, bringing hearts so near that they almost beat against each other, mixing the warm, mutual breaths, darting the fine personal electricity across between the meeting fingers, flushing the face and lighting the eyes with a quick language, subject often to gross interpretations on the part of the vile-hearted,—why, this fashionable institution seems to me to have been invented in an unfriendly quarter, usually conceived of as situated under us, to give our human passions leave to disport themselves, unproved by conscience, by reason, or by shame, almost at their will. I will not trust myself to speak of this further. My indignation waxes hotter than can well be controlled. I even seem to myself to have contracted some soil from having merely described truthfully what thousands of fellow Christians, ignorant of themselves, practice without swallowing a qualm.’”

BOB BURDETTE.

“May a Christian dance? Of course he may. He may swear and lie too, but it would not make him a better Christian. Surely, Christians, you may dance, but dancing will never identify you as a Christian. What puzzles us is why you ask the question so often.

“Christians who don’t dance never ask it. Yes, Christians, dance if you can’t live without it. Join hands with Salome, Herodias, and Herod, and circle to the left. But don’t be surprised if you are mistaken for a goat. That is the side they are on.”

NEW YORK JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

"Young ladies allow gentlemen privileges in dancing, which taken under any other circumstances would be considered as improper. It requires neither brains nor good morals to be a good dancer. As the love of one increases, the love of the other decreases. How many of the best men and women are skillful dancers?"

"In ancient times the sexes danced separately. Alcohol is the spirit of beverages. So sex is the spirit of the dance. Take it away and let the sexes dance separately, and dancing would go out of fashion very soon. Parlor dancing is dangerous. Tippling leads to drunkenness, and parlor dancing leads to ungodly balls."

A HINDOO NEWSPAPER.

"Fifteen hundred went to the Delhi ball; that means that we employ fifteen hundred fools in high stations. European women are like dolls, trained to give amusement to their owners, husbands, or lovers.

"We Hindoos dance under the excitement of religious enthusiasm, or hire dancers for our enjoyment; the European makes his wife perform this work, not only for himself, but for other men as well.

"Needless to say, it's indecent for a girl to dance with anybody but her brothers or intended husband; for a married woman to dance with anybody but her husband is atrocious. The many unhappy marriages among Europeans are either due to the fact that husband and wife became engaged under the excitement of the dance, or that either of the two strayed from the path of virtue with a third party under the same baneful influence."

ASSOCIATED PRESS DISPATCH.

"Louisville, Ky., June 15, 1903.—Bishop McClosky, of the Catholic diocese of Louisville, has issued an order against dancing and the use of intoxicants at picnics. The letter refers to the 'shockingly indecent form of the modern dance,' and commands observance of the instructions of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. As a result of the ruling, the picnic of the Catholic Knights of America, set for June 20th, has been called off."

CHAPTER III.

GAMES OF CHANCE.

THE gambling mania is on the increase. Gambling is a dangerous vice. Our Legislatures enact laws for its suppression. Our Churches cry out against it. Society recognizes its power for evil. And yet, strange to say, society and the Church are sometimes found encouraging and defending it. Not infrequently one finds a pack of cards in a Christian home, and social functions in many quarters are considered stale without a "game."

Here are a few items on the question which may prove of interest to those who have the welfare of the Church at heart:

BISHOP LAWRENCE.

(Protestant Episcopal.)

"Two generations ago playing cards was prohibited. Then the cards were brought forth from their hiding places and given a place in the innocent amusement of

the home. To-day they are returning to their old calling as the instrument of gambling.

"There are men and women who are worshipers in our Churches—some even communicants—who waste the daylight and concentrate all their thought and nerve on the game, and the game is not complete without some kind of a stake. What will you give for the future of the boy whose pin-money is the gain of his father's game at the club? The point I want to make is, that instead of dwelling on the excesses of the stock market or criticising the police for not suppressing the worst forms of gambling, we should look to ourselves and discover the symptoms of the same vice in us."

DR. HUNTINGTON.

(Rector of Grace Church, N. Y.)

"Is it true that hostesses are found in the higher walks of society who will let young men depart impoverished from drawing rooms to which they have been invited?

"I do not say that this is true; but if true, I cry shame.

"Is it true that women of high station are exhibiting jewelry bought with the profits of the gaming table? Is there anything more infamous than this? What avail crusades by committees of five, fifteen, or fifty, if behind closed doors such things go on as these? Is there not need of discipline to save society? With Sunday losing its sanctity, with marriage degenerating into a fast-and-loose contract, with pleasure obliterating the landmarks of decency, who shall say there is no need of discipline?

"I draw my illustrations from the lives of women because they are the custodians of men's morals. Men

are what the women make them. The more men desert the Church for the clubs, the more woman as the arbiter of morals becomes accentuated. In the life of the Puritan, the matron and the maiden stood out spotless. The spirit of discipline made them what they were. We must have that back if we would have life."

Commenting on the above, the *Sun*, of New York, said editorially:

"There is every indication that a revival of the gambling passion on a wide scale and as a fashionable mania is proceeding rapidly, and in the very circle of society in which move leaders and members of the committees now engaged in making so much noise about the regular gambling houses. . . .

"It is well, therefore, that the clergy have been called away from exclusive attention to the relative insignificance of public gambling and directed to consideration of the really portentous spread of gambling as a private and fashionable amusement, and that the note of warning has come from a pulpit so powerful and so far removed from sensationalism as is that of Grace Church."

Some of the reports of the doings in "polite society" are of such a nature as to cause sensible people to shun the fashionable circle as they would shun the devil. Read the following:

PROGRESSIVE EUCHRE.

(*From the Pittsburg Christian Advocate, April 9, 1893.*)

"Two incidents have lately come to our notice. One of them, reported in an exchange, stated that a fond mother was showing a visitor a fine punchbowl which

she had won a short time before at a progressive euchre party, and was very proud of the achievement; when her son, just reaching manhood, pulled out a roll of greenbacks, and thumping it on the table, said, 'See what I won playing cards the other night.' The mother, startled and horrified, said, 'Why, you have been gambling.' Sure enough, he had been gambling, and his mother knew enough to recognize the fact, and call the thing by its right name when done by her son; but she failed to see that she had just as certainly been 'gambling' as he had, and that she was just as guilty.

"The other was the case of a gambler in a town not a hundred miles from this city, who was brought under conviction, and was soundly converted. In giving his experience he referred to the business in which he had formerly been engaged, and said, in substance, that the time was when gamblers had to be taught; that is, the professional gamblers found it necessary to get young men under their influence and teach them to play cards and gamble. 'But now,' he said, 'this is no longer necessary. Young men are taught in their homes, oftener by their mothers and sisters, and they become adepts at the game, and become fascinated with it. Gambling in progressive euchre is quite familiar to them. The ladies of their own homes and their lady friends all join in it. Of course, they are thereby taught that it is not wrong. As a result the professional gamblers find the young men trained to their hands, and they are saved all trouble in the matter.'"

WHIST.

The *Homiletic Review* for May, 1903, quotes the following from Mr. George Russell, chairman of the Churchmen's Liberation League:

"It is impossible to exaggerate the evil influence of the game. It is transforming social life, and destroying the taste for healthful outdoor games. Week-end visits to the country houses now resolve themselves into orgies of whist."

DR. WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

"A young lady from my own city recently visited New York, and found herself in an elegant home, where a card party, with this spice (playing for prizes and money) for its diversion, was to assemble in the evening. The girl had scruples against gambling, and begged to be excused; but her hostess insisted that she must play, making her feel that she would violate the obligations of hospitality if she refused. With a great reluctance she yielded, and lost, during the evening, considerable money. The hostess offered, the next morning, to make good her loss, but the girl had spirit enough to refuse that reparation; since the greater wrong she had suffered would not be undone, she would not permit the lesser to be repaired. The essential vulgarity and brutality of a society in which a thing like that can happen does not need to be pointed out."

Commenting on the above, the editor of the *Central Christian Advocate*, July 30, 1902, says:

"And yet in the face of such instances as the one just cited, many people, who claim to be Christians, tolerate, encourage, defend, and even take part in various gambling games. O for the speedy coming of that day when every Christian will accept and follow the Scriptural teaching, that there must be a radical, noticeable differ-

ence between the true followers of Jesus Christ and the followers of the world!"

FOUNTAIN HEAD OF GAMBLING.

The last Legislature of the State of Washington (1903) passed a stringent anti-gambling law, making it a felony to play any game for anything of value. Stripped of some of its verbiage the law is as follows:

"Any person who shall conduct, carry on, open or cause to be opened, either as owner, proprietor, employee, or assistant, or in any manner whatever, whether for hire or not, . . . any game played with cards, dice, or any other device, whether the game be played or operated for money, checks, credits, or any other representative or thing of value, shall be guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be imprisoned in the penitentiary for the period of not less than one nor more than three years."

While the bill was pending petitions poured into the Legislature from every quarter urging its passage. The following from the press dispatches, under date of March 5th, speaks for itself:

"The senate passed the following concurrent resolution by Senator Reser, of Walla Walla:

"WHEREAS The Eighth Legislature of the State of

Washington has been petitioned by various individuals and organizations to pass House Bill No. 147, known as the Anti-gambling Bill; therefore, be it

“Resolved, By the Senate, the House concurring, That we present a request that persons, orthodox Churches, or other organizations cease the worst kind of gambling; namely, *raffling*.”

When the law was finally passed, considerable discussion arose over its probable effect on progressive euchre and other games played for prizes at social functions and in the quiet of the home. Lawyers and ministers were interviewed and some of their opinions, both as to the legal and moral aspects of the question, were published in the *Spokesman-Review* of Spokane, March 6, 1903.

The following statements are from two of Spokane's pastors:

REV. A. R. LAMBERT, D. D.

(*Pastor First Methodist Episcopal Church.*)

“To those who have been accustomed to engage in these social functions of the home it will doubtless seem as though an unnecessary hardship will ensue as a result of this bill, and that it would have been wise to discriminate more carefully between open gambling and innocent amusement. But to the pastor, whose business it is to make a close study of these questions, and who has

learned to his sorrow that many a bright, rosy-cheeked lad has taken the first step which culminated in his becoming a drunkard, when a mother's hand passed the sparkling winecup to him at her own table, and in like manner that that confirmed gambler of the Cœur d'Alene began his downward course, formed the fascination for games and gambling in the social circle whilst playing a game of whist or a game of cards where a prize was offered as an inducement to skill, it is but an obvious deduction that our legislators did wisely when they sought to eliminate the evil by beginning at the fountain head."

REV. O. W. VAN OSDEL, D.D.

(Pastor First Baptist Church.)

"You can never cure an evil by introducing it into your own home. There are some persons who advocate this method; but, in my judgment, formed through many years of investigation and observation, the gambling in the homes is one of the principal causes of public gambling. When a passion is formed for anything it is but natural for one to seek to gratify it. The homes where total abstinence is taught do not furnish as many drunkards as the homes which furnish strong drink in their cellars and upon their tables.

"So the homes which give lessons in gambling can not but graduate their scholars ready for the public gambling houses.

"The chief of police in the city of New York some years ago said that the young men of that metropolis who frequented the gambling houses had, for the most part, taken their first lessons at home. . . .

"If public gambling should be suppressed, upon what

ground should any gambling at all, anywhere, be tolerated?

"I see no reason why we should allow that to continue which has the record gambling has made for itself. A young man said to me the other day in speaking of a friend, 'He lost \$20,000 in this city, and is to-day in the penitentiary as the result of gambling.'

"There is naught but desolation in its path, and a law to stop it in the homes would bring blessings to thousands."

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

"To every young man who indulges in the least form of gambling, I raise a warning voice. Under the specious name of *amusement*, you are laying the foundation of gambling. Playing is the seed which comes up gambling. It is the light wind which brings up the storm. It is the white frost which preludes the winter. You are mistaken, however, in supposing that it is harmless in its earliest beginnings. Its terrible blight belongs, doubtless, to a later stage; but its consumption of time, its destruction of industry, its distaste for the calmer pleasures of life, belong to the very beginning. You will begin to play with every generous feeling. Amusement will be the plea. At the beginning the game will excite enthusiasm, pride of skill, the love of mastery, and the love of money. The love of money, at first almost imperceptible, at last will rule out all the rest—like Aaron's rod, a serpent, swallowing every other serpent. Generosity, enthusiasm, pride and skill, love of mastery, will be absorbed in one mighty feeling, the savage lust of lucre. . . .

"Hell is populated with the victims of '*harmless amusements*.'"

“Will man never learn that the way to hell is through the valley of *deceit*? The power of Satan to *hold* his victims is nothing to that mastery of art by which he first *gains* them. When he approaches to charm us, it is not as a grim fiend, gleaming from a lurid cloud, but as an angel of light radiant with innocence. His words fall like dew upon the flower, as musical as the crystal-drop warbling from a fountain. Beguiled by his art, he leads you to the enchanted ground. O, how it glows with every refulgent hue of heaven! Afar off he marks the dismal gulf of vice and crime, its smoke of torment slowly rising, and rising forever!—and he himself cunningly warns you of its dread disaster, for the very purpose of blinding and drawing you thither. He leads you to captivity through all the bowers of lulling magic. He plants your foot on odorous flowers; he fans your cheek with balmy breath; he overhangs your head with rosy clouds; he fills your ear with distant, drowsy music, charming every sense to rest. O, ye who have thought the way to hell was bleak and frozen as Norway, parched and barren as Sahara, strewn like Golgotha with bones and skulls, reeking with stench like the vale of Gehenna,—witness your mistake!

“The way to hell is gorgeous! It is a highway cast up; no lion is there; no ominous bird to hoot a warning; no echoes of the wailing pit; no lurid gleams of distant fires, or moaning sounds of hidden woe! Paradise is imitated to build you a way to death; the flowers of heaven are stolen and poisoned; the sweet plant of knowledge is here; the pure white flower of religion; seeming virtue and the charming tints of innocence are scattered all along, like native herbage. The enchanted victim travels on. . . .

“Ye who are meddling with the edges of vice, ye are

on this road, and utterly duped by its enchantments!
. . . Your feet stand on slippery places, whence in due time they shall slide, if you refuse the warning which I raise. They shall slide from heaven—never to be visited by a gambler—slide down to that fiery abyss below you, out of which none ever come. Then, when the last card is cast, and the game over, and you lost; then, when the echo of your fall shall ring through hell,—in malignant triumph, shall the Arch-Gambler, who cunningly played for your soul, have his prey!

“Too late you shall look back upon life as a *mighty game*, in which you were the stake, and Satan the winner!”

PART SECOND.
LEGISLATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

THE "General Rules," first prepared and signed by John and Charles Wesley, May 1, 1743, became a part of the constitution of Methodism in England, and later in America, and are now found in our Book of Discipline, and not in ours only, but in those of several other Methodist bodies.

Among the things prohibited in these "General Rules" is:

"The taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus."

For almost a century the Methodist Episcopal Church, by a strict interpretation of this rule, managed to restrain its members from indulgence in the popular amusements of the world. But as the Church grew in numbers, wealth, and popularity, it became more and more noticeable that

the wealthy and fashionable members were, many of them, growing careless in this matter.

The dance, the theater, and other forms of amusement that had formerly been excluded as vicious and demoralizing, were gradually coming into favor with the less spiritual, and, in the minds of some of our best and ablest leaders, the time had come for some specific legislation for the correction of the evil.

Accordingly, the General Conference of 1872 enacted the following "prohibitive statute," now found in Paragraph 248:

"IMPRUDENT AND UNCHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

"In cases of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, signing petitions in favor of granting license for the sale of intoxicating liquors, becoming bondsmen for persons engaged in such traffic, renting property as a place in or on which to manufacture or sell intoxicating liquors, *dancing*, playing at *games of chance*, attending *theaters*, *horse-races*, *circuses*, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools, or taking such *other amusements* as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency, or disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church, —first, let private reproof be given by the pastor or leader, and if there be an acknowledgment of the fault, and proper humiliation, the person may be borne with.

On the second offense the pastor or leader may take one or two discreet members of the Church. On a third offense let him be brought to trial, and if found guilty, and there be no sign of real humiliation, he shall be expelled."

The above is a very comprehensive paragraph. The offenses enumerated are:

1. Neglect of duties of any kind.
2. Imprudent conduct.
3. Indulging sinful tempers or words.
4. Buying, selling, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage.
5. Signing petitions for license for sale of such liquors.
6. Becoming bondsmen for persons in the liquor business.
7. Renting property for the manufacture or sale of liquor.
8. Dancing.
9. Playing at games of chance.
10. Attending theaters, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties.
11. Patronizing dancing schools.
12. Taking such *other amusements* as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency.
13. Disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church.

All of the foregoing is very properly classed under the head of "Imprudent and Unchristian Conduct."

It has been a part of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church since the General Conference of 1872.

The "imprudent" and the "intemperate" favor its repeal.

The Methodist tippler favors its repeal.

The Methodist who favors "license" wants it repealed.

The dancing Methodist demands its repeal.

The Methodist parents who send their children to dancing school want it repealed.

The Methodist who plays cards desires its repeal.

The Methodist who goes to the theater clamors for its repeal.

Now, what kind of a Methodist are you, and where do you stand on this question? Do you occupy high moral ground? Do you stand by the law as it is, or do you prefer to get down and be counted with those who favor the repeal of Paragraph 248?

CHAPTER II.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

IN the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the General Rules are the same as in our own book of Discipline, and are found in paragraphs 26-31.

Members of this Church are expected to refrain from: ~~_____~~ /

"The taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus."

The following is found under the head of "Decisions Rendered by the College of Bishops:"

PAR. 544. DANCING.

"A presiding elder decided, in the case of a local preacher complained of for having the art and science of modern dancing taught, that the case came under the rule of the Discipline forbidding 'improper tempers, words, or actions.' (Ques. 3, Par. 286.)

"This decision, on appeal, was sustained by the bishop, on the ground 'that it is contrary to the spirit of the Discipline and of the New Testament to teach

the art and science of modern dancing anywhere, or to practice promiscuous dancing anywhere,' and all the bishops concurred." (1858.)

In the chapter "On Worldly Amusements" occurs the following:

"Par. 628. *Resolved*, That inasmuch as the deliverances of our bishops, as contained in their quadrennial addresses to the General Conference from time to time, and as quoted at length by the special committee of fifteen, have declared dancing, theater-going, card-playing, and the like worldly indulgences, to be contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and violative of the General Rules and moral discipline of our Church, as also of the vows of our Church members; we, therefore, heartily indorse the aforesaid deliverances as containing the just and correct interpretation of the law in the premises, and, as such, this General Conference accepts the same as having *equal force and authority as if contained in the body of the Discipline.*" (General Conference 1890: Appendix.)

The General Conference of 1894 adopted the following:

"Par. 632. An explicit utterance was given by order of the last General Conference in our Pastoral Address on the subject of 'Worldly Amusements.' We now repeat that utterance. We abate none of its teachings with respect either to the manifest inconsistency of such indulgences with the spirit and profession of the Gospel, or the peril which they bring to the souls of men.

"Their multiplied and insidious forms are a source

of perpetual temptation and damage, and are denounced by the Word of God, and by that part of the General Rules which forbids 'the taking of such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.'

"This denunciation is explicit and comprehensive, and 'the name of the Lord Jesus' in this connection is a decisive test, and we are content to leave the issue to its sovereign arbitrament.

"Among these indulgences which can not stand this solemn test is the modern dance, both in its private and in its public exhibition, as utterly opposed to the genius of Christianity as taught by us. When persisted in, it is a justifiable ground of judicial action by the Church authorities."

"Par. 633. In this same condemnation, as equally contrary to the Scriptures, which declare that 'the friendship of the world is enmity against God,' to our General Rules, and to the vows which all our members have voluntarily assumed, this General Conference would include card-playing, theater-going, attendance upon race-courses, circuses, and the like. These offenses are, likewise, justifiable grounds of discipline."

The above is from the Discipline of 1898. I think the attitude of the Church remains unchanged on this important matter.

CHAPTER III.

THE METHODIST CHURCH.

(CANADA.)

THE General Rules are the same as in our own Church, are found in Paragraphs 31-35, and of course forbid—

“The taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

But this rule is explained or interpreted as follows:

“35. Note: The General Rules are to be understood as forbidding neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging in sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, *dancing*, playing at *games of chance*, encouraging *lotteries*, attending *theaters*, *horse-races*, *circuses*, *dancing parties*, patronizing *dancing-schools*, taking such *other amusements* as are obviously of a misleading or questionable moral tendency, and all acts of disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church.”

At the last General Conference (1902), and four years before, an effort was made to remove

the above "note," but the *Zion's Herald* correspondent, under date of September 24, 1902, says:

"The Conference decided to vote on the question without debate, and the vote was very largely in favor of maintaining the standard as a safeguard against the tendencies to worldly conformity on the part of the Church."

PART THIRD.

DISCUSSION.

CHAPTER I.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1872.

(From the Daily Christian Advocate, May 25th.)

“Report of the Committee on the State of the Church.”

NO. III. SINFUL AMUSEMENTS.

“Your committee have considered a large number of memorials and petitions from members of the Church in different sections of the land, deploring the sinful amusements too often indulged in by members of the Church; also many resolutions and pastoral addresses emanating from Annual Conferences and other official bodies belonging to our own and sister denominations. Influenced by these, as well as by their own personal observations, your committee are of the opinion that there is just cause for alarm, and a necessity for General Conference action, in order to arrest, if possible, practices which portend so much evil to the Church and to the world. The General Rules of our Church prohibit such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; ‘the singing those songs or reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge and love of God.’ This rule is sufficiently comprehensive, but not explicit enough to meet the wants of the times.

"We would therefore recommend that the chapter on imprudent conduct, Discipline, page 128, be so amended as to read, 'But in cases of neglect of duty of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, the buying or selling or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, dancing, playing at games of chance, attending theaters, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools, or taking such other amusements as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency, or disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church.

D. CURRY, *Chairman*.

"CYRUS NUTT, *Secretary*."

On the 29th of May the foregoing came up for discussion, and the following speeches are taken from the *Daily Advocate* of May 30th:

JUDGE M'CALMONT.

Judge M'Calmont felt that there was already too much legislation in the Discipline. This report was touching the General Rules, and he thought we ought to leave much of this to the preacher; if we should put too much into the General Rules then the preachers would not attend to them so much, and then, if we began to amend the General Rules, it would have to be done every four years, and he hoped they would be allowed to remain untouched.

DR. SLICER.

Dr. Slicer said it was known that he always made short speeches, although he sometimes preached a long sermon if it seemed called for by some particular occasion. There is no axiom more certain than this, that the world is governed too much, and when he saw a General Conference flooded with hatfuls, and cornbasketfuls of changes proposed to the Discipline, he wondered if the public at large would not conclude that we had better burn the book and begin *de novo*. We are on the way to make ourselves ridiculous in this matter of changes. When God gave the law on Sinai amidst thunderings and lightnings, he gave the Ten Commandments in a few words. When the Redeemer of mankind came to reaffirm these commandments, he did it within the compass of a few short sentences; and when Mr. Wesley, in the organization of the Methodist societies in England, made rules, they were comprised in a few short advices. Dr. Slicer declared that, after fifty years of active service, this book, the Discipline, has got so big that, for one, he did not comprehend the half of

it. If one had a good tumbler of milk, why take it to the pump and water it until it is nearly all water? Yes, sir, water the Discipline. So the stock people say when they make four shares out of one. He did not want the Discipline watered. Let us stand by the book, and keep it in a large degree as our fathers had it. If he had charge of a circuit or station, and had a good class-leader, if it was necessary, he would give him twenty classes. He would rather employ a woman who knew how to lead class successfully than twenty men who were ignorant in this respect. The wise committee, that had spent anxious days and nights and weeks to tell what should be done, had brought out this report, from which he hoped they might be delivered. Let us have the book as it is. He hoped to live and die a Methodist of the Wesleyan type, and as such he was opposed to the whole thing now proposed.

DR. GOODE.

Dr. Goode was surprised and grieved at the remarks just offered. Though he was not so old a man as Dr. Slicer, he would say that he thought

age and experience might have come in to cast the weight in the scale of right, and not by ridicule to attempt to evade the point, and take off the force of such a plain and practical provision as the one before us. That such a provision was necessary he thought every pastor present would affirm.

True, the Ten Commandments were comprised in a few words, but they were specific: "Thou shalt not" do so and so. He challenged any man to object to any one of the provisions specifically named in the report. They may object elsewhere, but they would not do it here. The Church needed this provision, and the ministry needed it, for he had been called upon to bring this rule to bear. We needed it for the membership, and in enacting measures so important it was not the time to be carried away with a little ridicule, or satire, or rhetoric. It was a plain matter and should be acted upon.

DR. CLARK.

Dr. Clark thought no man had noticed more the tendency of professed Christians to indulge in

sinful amusements, or to affiliate with the world in its spirit, than he had. He appreciated the sentiments of Dr. Goode, and of others, as indicated in the report. It was only a question of the proper method to be pursued to meet this exigency and check this tendency in our Church. It seemed to him a confession of our weakness when they resorted to special legislation on these things. We have recommended the spirit of our doctrine in our Discipline, and there we have distinctly recorded our disapprobation of any amusements which can not be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, sir, there seemed to be something left to the judgment of the administrator of the Discipline. When we have begun this specific legislation, we can not draw a line and say where we may stop. To undertake to do as is done in this report, in the end of the case it will be overdone. Then it will not be enforced, and can not be as given in that report. Our Discipline now stands outspokenly against this worldly amusement, and we are understood as setting our faces against it, and if improper things were done the pastor has the power in his hands, and such

members may be brought to trial. He hoped we should not make an acknowledgment of weakness by resorting to special legislation.

REV. M. HILL.

Rev. M. Hill said that it was objected that there is danger of too much legislation; but the fact is that there is little more proposed in the report than there is now in the Discipline, and what little is added travels in the same line. Why was what is now in the Discipline put there? Because it was then a matter of doubt whether these amusements were right; but our fathers took the pious side strongly, and by these enactments they specify "the singing of songs" as prohibited. The reading of such books as are not calculated to promote the religious welfare of the reader, they said, should be avoided. Why, then, did they not specifically exclude dancing? Because there was then no question that it was bad, no more so than with regard to murder; but the opinions of the Church have become lax on this question, and it is therefore necessary to specify it. He was aware that to put these restrictions in the Discipline might

make a little friction in some quarters, but this is true of other matters which it is proposed to insert. Now that the question is raised as to the right or wrong of these amusements, the Church should settle the question in some way. The young people of the Church are growing up in doubt upon these questions. Such amusements are allowed in other Churches, and he thought it would be well for this body, as Christian legislators, to express positively an opinion that shall embody the sentiment of the Church.

[At this point the discussion closed for the day, but was again taken up on June 1st (Saturday), and the following report is from the *Daily Advocate* of June 3d:]

DR. HOLMES.

Dr. Holmes had the floor on the previous consideration of this report. He was opposed to the report because the Discipline was sufficiently explicit now ; he was opposed to any attempt to legislate against sins to which we ourselves have no personal temptation. We have been told, as an argument in favor of this report now pending,

that when the General Rule was adopted on sinful amusements there was no danger of Methodists thinking of dancing. He said when the rule was adopted against softness and needless self-indulgence, there was no danger then as now ; so of the rule on laying up treasures upon earth ; so when the rule was adopted against putting on of gold and costly apparel,—not the same danger as now ; now, on account of the number of gold watches owned by ministers, there were scarcely enough left to stand up and remonstrate ; so of the rule on taking unlawful interest. He said that he who at proper times and proper places engages in plays was not transgressing, but fulfilling a law of his nature. He believed that there were children of our ministers and members who were driven to Satan because their parents would be wiser than their Maker, and repress innocent amusements in proper places. He believed that smiles were just as godly as tears, and laughter as whining.

REV. G. W. HUGHEY.

Rev. G. W. Hughey spoke in favor of this report. He would not say one word against

smiles or laughter ; he had no confidence in long-faced religion ; but this report had been drawn up in response to petitions from Churches and Annual Conferences, for the authority of the Church to speak out on these sins of dancing and theaters, etc., and he hoped to see the report adopted.

(The vote was taken, and the report adopted “by a vote of 179 yeas to 75 nays.”)

CHAPTER II.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1892.

IN the *Daily Christian Advocate* for May 24, 1892, the following reports were printed:

STATE OF THE CHURCH, NO. VI.

"Your committee to which was referred certain memorials asking for the revision of Paragraph 242, touching imprudent and unchristian conduct, beg leave to report that we believe there is no sufficient reason for making the proposed change in the Discipline.

"JOHN MILEY, *Chairman.*

"J. F. BERRY, *Secretary.*"

MINORITY REPORT OF COMMITTEE—THE STATE OF THE CHURCH.

"The minority of the Committee on the State of the Church respectfully report that we recommend the following changes in the Discipline relating to amusements:

"First. Strike out of Paragraph 242 all between the words 'intoxicating liquors,' in the ninth line, and the words 'such other amusements,' in the twelfth line, and instead of the words omitted insert a new paragraph in Part III, Chapter III, to be numbered Paragraph 271, as follows:

AMUSEMENTS AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

"The tendency to indulge in various amusements, either incompatible with the Christian life or a serious impediment to it, greatly increases. While recreation proper in kind and amount is allowable, and even necessary, to those who are 'not slothful in business,' nothing is more clearly taught in the Word of God or confirmed by experience and observation than that no one who professes to live unto Christ can seek amusements as an end or indulge in those of such a character that he will be likely to be so fascinated by them as to interfere with the righteous, sober, and godly life to which God has called him.

"It is also clear that everything which appeals to the sensual appetite must be discarded. These ever 'obtrude beyond their proper sphere,' and he who is taught by his Lord and Master to pray 'Lead us not into temptation,' will not seek diversion in those things which stimulate the most dangerous temptations and strengthen the worst impulses.

"No true Christian can doubt that any amusement which diminishes the spirit of prayer or interest in spiritual things, or disqualifies for earnest efforts to lead men to the consecration of their hearts and lives to God, is wrong. Nor can any thoughtful Christian engage in any diversion which has a pernicious effect upon the young, or which can not be safely imitated by them.

"Amusements also which lead the worldly-minded to suppose that those who indulge in them are not devoted Christians should be avoided. He who would 'please his neighbor for his good to edification' will indulge in nothing whose general effect is bad, even

though upon himself it may be indifferent, or, as he supposes, good.

"Our Church from the beginning has denounced amusements which do not agree with these principles. So far from retracting its testimony, the loss of multitudes 'who ran well for a season,' and, while avoiding gross sins, have been drawn away from the simplicity of the Christian life by worldly dissipations, impresses it with the necessity of once more bearing witness against the error of those who are 'lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.'

"We affectionately urge our members not to follow blindly their own inclinations, or to imitate the multitude who live unto themselves, and enjoin upon our pastors the duty of exhorting with those who are obviously in danger of substituting earthly joys for those of true religion.

"Paragraph 242, as amended, will read as follows:

"Paragraph 242. In cases of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling, or using of intoxicating liquors as a beverage, signing petitions in favor of granting license for the sale of intoxicating liquors, becoming bondsmen for persons to engage in such traffic, renting property as a place in or on which to manufacture or sell intoxicating liquors or for immoral purposes, taking such amusements as are obviously of a misleading or questionable moral tendency, and therefore are, as declared by the General Rules, such diversions as can not be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus, or disobedience to the order and discipline of the Church,—first let private reproof be given by a preacher or leader, and, if there be an acknowl-

edgment of the fault and proper humiliation, the person may be borne with. In a second offense the preacher or leader may take one or two discreet members of the Church. In a third offense let him be brought to trial, and if found guilty, and there be no signs of real repentance, he shall be expelled.

"J. W. EATON,	THOMAS H. DALE,
"W. L. McDOWELL,	WILLIAM MCKINLEY,
"CHARLES L. WING,	W. P. THIRKIELD,
"G. W. STAYER,	OLIVER GARD,
"D. W. DIGGS,	G. F. EATON."
"S. HAMILTON,	

During the session there was considerable discussion of this question on the side, and a number on articles, pro and con, appeared in the *Daily Advocate*, but no change was made, and the rule concerning amusements remained in its place.

It was evident, however, that the question was not settled, and not a few predicted that the General Conference of 1896 would strike out the specific clause which had become so offensive to the worldly element in the Church.

In the next chapter we shall see what was done, and how it was done, by the followers of John Wesley, in the city by the lake.

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1896.

AT this session the following report appeared in the *Daily Christian Advocate* in the issue of May 15th, on page 101:

COMMITTEE ON THE STATE OF THE CHURCH.

REPORT No. 3.

(Concerning Paragraph 240.)

"Your committee respectfully present the following report:

"After carefully considering the various memorials before us, and after reliable information obtained concerning the constitutionality of Paragraph 240 of the Discipline, now pending in the Committee on the Judiciary, we are persuaded that it is not advisable to make any change in the aforesaid article as it now stands in the Discipline.

J. D. WALSH, *Chairman, pro. tem.*

"WM. A. LEITCH, *Secretary.*

On the 20th of May the report was presented, and, after an animated discussion, the Conference, by a large majority, voted against any change.

The following speeches are found in the *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 21, 1896, on pages 138, 139:

L. MASTER.

Mr. President, I sincerely desire that what I have to say on this question shall not be construed to mean an argument in favor of those proscribed amusements; but rather an argument in favor of the right of individual conscience and the right of individual judgment. I am coming more and more to be convinced that the action of the General Conference of 1872, that put into our Discipline that proscribed list of amusements, was a great mistake, and as involving us, and will continue to involve us, in constant embarrassment. It was sufficient to have pronounced upon the general principle that no amusements should be taken, or recreation, that could not have been taken in the name of the Lord Jesus. We ought to have left the application of the principle to the individual conscience and judgment. And the question comes to me more seriously embarrassed by virtue of this fact, that there is no agreement in

the judgment of Christendom upon the point. If it were the universal agreement or judgment of Evangelical Christendom that under no circumstances could a person indulge in any one of these proscribed amusements without the commission of sin, it would be a different thing. If under no circumstance could a young husband and a young wife, in the quiet of the evening hour in the home, engage in the game of cards, without committing sin; and if under no circumstances could any one attend the theater, presenting one of the dramas of Shakespeare, without committing a sin; then we might very safely put into the Discipline this list of proscribed amusements. But the common judgment of Evangelical Christendom does not bear out this proposition. There are multiplied thousands of members of our Church that are not clear on this point. And now we come in the name of the highest authority of the Church, and we say that under any circumstances, if you engage in any of these things, you are liable to expulsion from the Church. We forbid under any circumstances, under pain of expulsion from the

Church. Now, I say to you, it is because the great Roman Catholic Church assumes to deny the right of private judgment and the right of private conscience in these matters, beyond even such a limit as this, that has made her the great oppressor of the conscience and judgment of the world. We can not afford to follow and continue to follow in the wake of the Church of Rome. And then I submit that government by conviction within is a thousand times better than a judgment by authority without. And I submit again, that if we are going to have a proscribed list of amusements, you want to reconstruct your list. If you forbid the attendance at the theater, and on horse-racing, why not forbid the attendance on the modern game of football, as barbarous in such cases as a horse-race. If you forbid a game of cards, why not a game of billiards? And more than that, the law as it is is a dead letter. It is not enforced. It will not be enforced. It can not be enforced. There is not a pastor in any of the great Churches in the great cities that can enforce this law. And disrespect for any one law leads to

disrespect for all law. I move to strike out that part about amusements.

J. B. GRAW.

Mr. Chairman, I regard it, brethren, as extremely unfortunate that any one should be found on this Conference floor favoring the removal from our Book of Discipline of Paragraph 240. [Very great applause.] We are living in what may be termed an age of worldliness and sinful pleasure, and if this paragraph is removed from our Book of Discipline it will carry joy to the hearts of those who belong to our Churches and yet who are not regarded as spiritually-minded. No matter what we may say, no matter what explanations may be made, the removal of this paragraph from our Book of Discipline will be regarded as a movement in favor of worldliness; and if there ever was a time when we needed a deeper and fuller and richer baptism of the Holy Ghost, this is the time. I ask the question, Who among us is prepared to say that any one of these sinful and worldly amusements specified in this

chapter should be practiced by our Church members? As a pastor I have confronted this question within the past year. My name has been heralded from the Atlantic to the Pacific as having taken ground against dancing, theater-going, and worldly pleasures; and the people who have favored that in our Churches have said, "The General Conference will remove this paragraph, and then we shall enjoy a larger liberty." About the only argument, Mr. Chairman, that can be made in favor of the removal of this paragraph is that it specifies a number of sins and fails to specify them all. Why sin multiplies and ramifies to that extent in our day that if you were to specify every sin in the catalogue of hell, there would be an increase of sins. Now this paragraph declares that not only should these sins be condemned by the Church, but all other sins of similar character. I hope the paragraph will remain. [Great applause.] I stand for a pure Methodism; and, if I stand alone, in the name of God I will go down with the old flag flying, standing by the old principles. [Great applause.]

DR. J. F. BERRY.

It will be admitted by all the members of this Conference that if any class of the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church is vitally interested in this discussion it is the young men and women of the Church. This is not a question which concerns the fathers and mothers, the grandfathers and grandmothers, so much as some other questions that have been before this body.

Some months ago I opened the columns of the *Epworth Herald* for a full and free discussion of the question. I called upon any reader of the *Herald* to formulate some general deliverance that would be a proper substitute for the prohibitions which have been objectionable to some brethren. In response to that appeal there were but two general deliverances sent in. They were very unsatisfactory to the young people, so far as I could judge; and did not meet with any general, hearty response. I was immediately flooded with petitions and protests from the young people of our constituency; and only in a comparatively few cases were there any intimations that the young

people represented in the Epworth League had any desire for the modification which has been proposed in these memorials. [Great applause.] If the young people of our Church were anxious for this change, I would feel that it would be proper for us to consider the question with great deliberation and with very great care; it would seem as though it would be advisable for us to devote a good deal of time to the consideration of the question. But from Maine to California, from Minnesota to the Gulf, wherever this question has been proposed in our Conventions, so far as I have yet heard, there has been a universal and unanimous protest against this modification. [Very great applause.] I believe that I am not assuming too much when I stand in this presence to-day and presume to represent the young people, the vast majority of the young people, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Brethren of the General Conference, if you wish to please us, if you wish to stand by us in our conscientious preferences, if you wish to voice the convictions of young Methodism in this land and around the world wherever we are represented, allow Para-

graph 240 to remain just as it is. So far as this catalogue is concerned, I ask you, Are not the popular worldly amusements which have been the greatest agencies in the hands of the devil to lead our young people away from the paths of holiness and right—are they not mentioned in this catalogue now? As one speaker has said, it would be impossible to keep up with the inventions of the devil and make a new catalogue every year. We have provided for that by enumerating these amusements that seem most subtle and dangerous. And then it is assumed that amusements of this character are also to be avoided. Brethren, in the name of young Methodism, in the name of the future of our great organization that is trying to build up the intellectual, social, and spiritual life of the Church of to-morrow, in the name of the deeper spirituality of Methodism, in the name of the kingdom of our Christ that we love so much, vote down any proposition that seeks to take away from these young people the safeguards which are given them in the prohibitions which are found in Paragraph 240.

J. D. WALSH.

And a member sitting on the front seat, in whose judgment I have very great confidence, says he is ready to vote. This report was brought in by your committee, has already been discussed, and your committee has reported that no change is desired; for reasons recited, and for other reasons also, it may be, that no change is desired at this time. Now it is plainly before us that this unfortunate chapter has been in the Discipline since 1872. It is a chapter encompassed with infirmities. Some one has attempted, in the insertion of the words, "for proper regulation for our Churches," to do some legislating. And it has always impressed me, since it has been in, as smattering of ill-chosen words, from an ill-considered attempt at legislation. There are one hundred and more words with nothing to divide them but a comma, and it enters into several different relations of evil-doing, and of voting, and of other matters, and then comes to the specifications. I direct your attention to the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church has acquired a reputation in her administration as against these four specifi-

cations that have been moved to be stricken out of this report, long before 1872; but they, having been introduced here into this place, however awkwardly, deserve to remain until there shall arise some one (and I hope he will arise during the next quadrennium) that shall present a substitute for this chapter that may be one, or two, or three chapters, wherein the matters recited shall be properly placed. If it were taken out now, there would not anything stop the outside world, and a good deal of the inside of our Church, from believing all objections to the specified amusements were removed by the action of this house. I believe we are shut up to the necessity of keeping it until some time when a worthy chapter or chapters shall be made to take the place of this that I call an unworthy chapter. Your committee believe, because it was before another committee, they have raised something about constitutionality—[Cries of "vote," "vote," "vote,"]—I will stop when I say that some wise men who have been writing about a new ethical condition having been brought into our legislation by this chapter—I believe those wise men are mistaken.

Bishop Foster, who was in the chair, then put the question, and when the vote was taken announced that "The chapter stands by a large majority."

NOTE.—The reader will notice that in each General Conference reference is made to a different number when the paragraph on amusements is mentioned—at one time it is 242, at another 240, and now it is 248. This is explained when it is understood that the changes made by the General Conference make it necessary to revise the Discipline every four years, and by the introduction of new matter or the elimination of old, the order of the paragraphs, and consequently their numbers, have to be changed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1900.

THE following reports were published in the *Daily Christian Advocate* for May 19, 1900, pages 248, 249:

COMMITTEE ON STATE OF THE CHURCH. REPORT NO. 7.

To the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church:

Your Committee has carefully considered a large number of memorials from all parts of the country bearing specially upon Paragraph 248 of the Discipline, and generally upon the relation of the Church to certain forms of worldly amusement. We recommend:

"1. That the following words be omitted from paragraph 248, beginning with the eighth line; namely, 'dancing, playing at games of chance, attending theaters, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools,' and the words 'or,' and 'other' in the clause immediately following, so that the paragraph, when amended, shall read:

"Paragraph 248. In case of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, signing petitions in favor of granting license for the sale of intoxicating liquors, becoming bondsmen for persons engaged in such traffic, renting property as a place in or on which to manufacture or sell intoxicating liquors, taking such amusements as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency, or disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church:

"1. Let private reproof be given by the pastor or leader, and if there be an acknowledgment of the fault and proper humiliation the person may be borne with. On the second offense the pastor or leader may take one or two discreet members of the Church, on a third offense let him be brought to trial, and if found guilty, and there be no sign of real humiliation, he shall be expelled.

"2. We recommend that the following be inserted as an additional section in Chapter III of the Discipline, now called 'Special Advices:'

"Our Church has from the beginning of its history insisted that 'dancing, playing at games of chance, attending theaters, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools,' and other amusements which can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus, are perilous to the spiritual life and influence of the members of our Church and enervating to the spiritual power of the Church in the great work of saving souls.

"The tendency in social circles toward worldly and dangerous amusements was never stronger than it is at the present time and therefore we deem it wise to reaffirm our historic attitude upon this subject; and

urge our people to abstain from, and bear their unwavering testimony against, all amusements and diversions which endanger Christian life and depress the spiritual power of the Church.

"This advice must not be interpreted as the waiving of the Church's right to call to account any one who continues to indulge these diversions which can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"R. E. PATTISON, *Chairman*.

"E. J. GRAY, *Secretary*.

MINORITY REPORT.

"*Resolved*, That we have carefully considered memorials for, and protests against, legislation pertaining to Paragraph 248 of the Discipline, and recommend that no action be taken at this time.

"JOHN W. BALSON.	OLE OLSON.
"C. J. HOWES.	CARL HANSON.
"J. L. FISHER.	A. L. ELVIGEN.
"A. E. P. ALBERT.	CHAS. REUSS.
"E. M. BEACH.	JAMES LEONARD.
"SAMUEL JOHNSON.	M. S. MARBLE.
"W. G. WILSON.	L. H. BUNYAN."
"G. B. COLLINS.	

The foregoing majority report was presented to the Conference by Governor Pattison on the 25th of May, and the discussion of the question was on and was not concluded till next day.

The following speeches are found in the *Daily Advocate*, beginning on page 343:

C. J. HOWES.

And now it is proposed to do away with Paragraph 248 of the Discipline and its power to restrain the membership of our Church from indulging in worldly and sinful amusements. I beseech you to spare one feature of our Church polity. In the law of the Church as it now stands, dancing and playing at games of chance, attending theaters and circuses and horse-races and dancing parties and patronizing dancing schools, are already forbidden under pain of expulsion from our Church, if proceeded in after reproof. We have declared by legislation that they are the diversions which can not be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus; that they are amusements of a misleading moral tendency; that indulgence in them is imprudent and unchristian conduct, for which a member, if he persists in it after being reproofed should be arraigned and expelled from membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church. And now the report of the majority proposes to take all that out of the penal code and transfer it to the chapter on advices in the Discipline of the Church. In other words, it proposes to say to the world and

to all of our Church people that it is not morally wrong to dance, or play cards, or to go to horse-races, or to attend the theater, or to patronize dancing schools, but that since it will not promote spirituality and serve to develop Christian character, why we would advise our Church members to abstain from those places. You can not take it out of Paragraph 248 and transfer it to the chapter on advices without publishing to the world that you retreat from your former position on that subject. And I see that in the present state of the Church this is no time to retreat or take a single backward step. You say that, and you will say what no other Church on this earth has ever said. Other Churches—some of them—have been silent, and others have simply advised, but not one, so far as I know, has ever said in an act of legislation that it was not morally wrong to do those things. They have advised against it, and some of them have remained silent, but when we attempt to take out of the Discipline Paragraph 248 we say it is not wrong to do that. [Voices—"No," "no," "no."] But you do. I say you do, and that a man may indulge in them and still be a

member in good standing of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Now, I say this, that if men or women are determined to, and do, attend horse-races or play cards, we had better let them go out of the Methodist Episcopal Church. You say that, and you will grieve the great body of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The world will applaud you; every dancer, every horse-racer, every gambler and every theater-goer, and every manager of a circus, and every dancing master on this earth, will applaud you if you do this. But the people who attend prayer-meeting and class-meeting will be grieved in their hearts when you do it. More than that, the great Epworth League organization of our Church will be grieved. The Epworth League, I say it to its honor, does not demand this thing.

G. P. MAINS.

Mr. Chairman, I do not think this body ought to allow itself to be misled by any rhetorical declarations as to what this report of the majority, if admitted, will commit the Church to. There can be no mistake on the part of any intelligent

mind as to the historic attitude of the Methodist Episcopal Church concerning sinful amusements. Before 1872, when this special paragraph was introduced into our Discipline, we had a general statement, a statement entered generally by the great founder of our Church, the great human founder; a statement as perfect as could well be put into any form; a statement of principles that leaves this thing where it ought eternally to stand, and where it makes sufficient discrimination against evil and for the right for the government of every individual Christian to the world's end. Nor should we be misled by any menacing statement as to what will happen provided we, as a General Conference, have the courage to place this matter where, in the judgment of thinking and discriminating men of the Church, it ought to stand. We are told that if we take this paragraph out of the Discipline, as recommended by the majority report, that action would be applauded by every saloonkeeper and by every devotee of disorderly conduct throughout the world. Suppose it be so, sir. Does that in any way misrepresent our real attitude? Let there be

no discrimination against the honest purpose of the men who desire to put out this paragraph as it now stands. It ought to be said, and nobody can deny it, that there is not a man of conscience—and every man on this floor is a man of conscience—there is not one of us who desires to lend, sir, by a feather's weight to any evil conduct of any member of the Methodist Episcopal Church anywhere. Let there be no slander against the high purpose of the men who persistently, from conviction, believe that this paragraph ought to be eliminated from the Discipline. Now, sir, if, as is the judgment of multitudes of the best men, our leading ministers and laymen in this country, it was a mistake in the beginning to enter this paragraph in the Discipline in 1872, let us take the consequences of this mistake. Let us do the manly, the heroic thing as a Church, as would be justly required of an individual under like circumstances. Let us do the manly thing of backing straight away from this mistake. I have no doubt, sir, in the matter of deep and studious personal conviction that this paragraph has wrought immense damage to the

life of our Church. [Cries of "No," "no."] You say "no," and I say "yes." Now, Mr. Chairman, there is certainly a large judgment, and it is an intelligent judgment, and as conscientious as intelligent, in this Church, that the presence of this paragraph is an historic mistake and an egregious blunder, and, if it be so, we may suffer a brief and sensational misrepresentation if we consent to take it out; but our historic position, our declared position to all intelligent minds, to all men whose opinions concerning us are worth anything,—to all these our position will be consistent and understood.

It will stand as an historic fact, and at best the applause with which we are threatened by the world will be but a nine days' sensation at the outside, and after this has been taken from us we shall be relieved permanently, sir, from the immeasurable embarrassment as to denominational life. I hope with all my soul—and I yield not in conscience to any man here so far as my intelligence goes in this matter—I hope with all my soul that the majority report will be accepted,

though I don't altogether like its chapter on advisements.

NOTE.—Further on will be found a chapter in which Dr. Mains presents his views at greater length, and covering more fully the important features of the question.

W. F. SHERIDAN.

Mr. Chairman and brethren, I am in favor of the minority report. I favor it, brethren, not on the ground on which my friend from Kentucky, Dr. Howes, favors it, altogether, because it is one of the institutions that has come down to us; for I am not afraid of new things, if they be true things and right things. Indeed, brethren, I have exceedingly liked the temper of this Conference in that it has seen fit to do away many things that needed doing away, and has seen fit to pilot our way to new and better things. But let us halt before we lay aside the rule that has been a wise and a proper and a helpful rule in times past. So I say I favor the minority report, both from the principle involved, and, secondly, on the ground of expediency. It has been said that when the Church is in the right con-

dition spiritually, there are none of these legislations that pertain to conduct. I ask you to refer back to the fifteenth chapter of Acts—to that first great General Conference which was held just a short time after Pentecost, when the spiritual life of the Church was at high tide, and when it was distinctly legislated by that great General Conference that the people should abstain, not only from those things which their inner sense of right prompted them to abstain from, but from certain other deeds that were of doubtful use or that were in dispute, and that the apostles believed to be wrong. And if the Church thus in its beginnings had a right and found it wise to legislate concerning personal conduct, shall we, with needs as great, if not more pressing, find it wise to legislate or leave the restrictions already legislated as they stand?

Mr. Chairman, I wish to say, in the second place, that I believe that, if we will study history, we shall see that the declensions in spiritual life in the Church have arisen not so much from heretical doctrines that have been introduced. The great weaknesses of the Church in time past have

not come from the universities nor the schools where new teachings have arisen, but they have come from the conduct of the clergy and the conduct of the people. They have been matters that pertained to the moral life; and out of this declined moral life of the Church has arisen again and again the heresy of the Church. And so I say, there is more danger to the Church from the lowered moral and spiritual tone than there is danger from any so-called heretical teaching with which some are afflicted to-day. In the third place, and lastly, I am opposed to the majority report and in favor of the minority report on the ground of expediency. I believe, Mr. Chairman, that whatever may have been true at the time when these rules did not have their place in our Discipline, it would be an unwise thing, now that they are there, to take them out, because as sure as to-morrow's sun will rise, if we shall vote them out, it will be telegraphed from one end of the land to the other; and no amount of explanation or preaching that we can do on the subject will break down the tremendous fact that the Methodist Church has backed down from her

rules on the subject. And so, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the wise thing, the right thing, for us is not to mend these rules, but keep them, lovingly, kindly, patiently, and with long-suffering. Let us hold true to this standard of faith; and when the enemy comes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord that is in us shall lift a standard against him.

B. L. PAINE.

I have been reading something of the matter before us this afternoon. I do not hear that the young people of the Church are calling for this. Take the local Chapters, and how many of them have said anywhere that they would like to have the restrictions removed? Take the District Leagues of our Church, take the body of the laymen,—from them have there come up any requests for this? I ask you who come with these words to-day, asking that we lower the stand that we have taken in the past? Why is it that there is this anxiety? What has our Church been doing during the years that have passed and gone? As I understand, the Methodist Church

has been known as a soul-saving station, and if we have been soul-savers we have not been engaging in what is termed questionable amusements. Questionable amusements do not go hand in hand with the young man or woman or with the older man or woman that goes in and out through the Church, talking personally to men and women about their soul's eternal interests. They do not go together. There are people in our Church who engage in these things whom we look upon and term very good people; but from my experience the ones that are engaging in this do not engage actively in soul-saving work in our Churches. When the Methodist Church takes down her banners and attempts to enter into other fields to draw people in, then I say "Ichabod" is written upon her doors. The young people, they say, will be drawn to our Church; if they are not coming into our Church for active Christian work, why do we want to cumber our Church records with their names? So I claim there is no call from the great mass of young people that these restrictions be removed. If there is no call, then I stand up as a

worker in the Epworth League and say to you, let us keep the restrictions we have had in the past, for we have been doing very well.

What do our young people do in the League? What do your young people do? I am a member of the League at home. I say to you, it runs up into the thousands, the visits they make among the sick and afflicted. It is a great blessing to the sick. That is the work that we want to train them in; it is not the work of the dancing school; and if that is the work that we would train them in, why pull down the bars, if the pulling of them down means that we are not very particular about this thing, just so the bars are opened that a large number shall come into our fold. I stand before you saying, give us the old way that has proved a very good way in the past.

DR. RAYMOND.

Mr. Chairman and brethren, let us reason together, and in order to reason together let us be quiet. It has been interesting to note how the opinion of each speaker on this question seems to have been determined by the particular

experience that he himself may have had. Some of the brethren have spoken for the country where the pressure of the difficulties connected with this question is very little felt. Others have spoken for the cities, the larger Churches, where the difficulties are felt. Now very likely before I get through you will conclude that my own comes, too, from a limited experience, and yet it does seem to me that in this General Conference we ought to legislate on principles that are broad enough to cover the whole field of our Church. Therefore, if we legislate too much in detail we shall not fit any part of the Church. Are there not some great fundamental principles underlying this discussion that may be made use of to give us a line of rational action with reference to this question of amusements?

My experience comes from about twenty years of dealing with the young people in our colleges. The first thing I want to say with reference to this argument is this: we are losing a large number of young people from our best homes in all of our larger towns and cities. That is a matter of fact. They are going to other

Churches, and that is the next thing to a calamity. Now, it is not fair to say that they are not spiritual because they go to other Churches under these restrictions. There may be other reasons. It may be that they are not among the young people who indulge in these amusements, but who are not willing to be put under these regulations. There is a large number of these young people who do not come into the Church at all on that ground, and there is a large number of young people who come into the Church and yet do not keep the regulation. The regulation itself is a dead letter over a very large part of our Church. Many of these young people who come into the Church feel they ought to determine their own action, and it cultivates duplicity; it undermines the fundamental thing which is genuineness and honesty; and wherever we undermine this attitude of mind by the legislation that we enact, then we compromise all the other virtues. The next thing I want to say is, that from the standpoint of pedagogy there is an argument that can be made on this question. In the study of the development of the human mind

we begin with the senses, and then memory comes forward, and then the reflective powers, and we try to adjust the curriculum which we organize to meet these demands of the character and mind, and we strike a point, when we reach about the sixteenth year of the age, when the will comes prominently forward; and now it is demanded, and we are providing throughout all our colleges an elective course of study. You follow that same thought out into the State. You can't dictate everything for the young man who has come to be eighteen or twenty years old. He rebels; nature has built him in a given way, and we must, if we would follow nature's order, normal nature, we must recognize the order of the senses, the memory, reflective powers, and volitional powers, coming forward at a given time. To deal with these volitional powers, you can't simply build a fence around a young man and say to him, "You shan't do this or that." You can't build a character in that way. You can't build an athlete by taking him up in your arms and carrying him around the track where he is to run the race, but he has to go out and run

it for himself. So as these powers come forward in the development of the human mind, the normal development of the human mind, we are to recognize them and give them rightful choice under all the restraining influence that can be properly brought to bear upon the reason.

The next thought I want to suggest is, that it seems to me to be entirely unscriptural. Something has been said with regard to the Scriptural argument on this question. There is nothing in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ that is of this character. Indeed, if you go back to the Old Testament Scriptures, you will find there plenty of regulations laid out for Israel, but that was in Israel's undeveloped condition. Ceremonialism and Pharisaism are the conditions you find there; but as you begin to move forward toward the New Testament, there is a continued taking off of law and regulation. The more you educate, the less you dictate. If a man is low in being he must have restrictions; if a man is high in being he takes charge of his own life and guides it.

E. J. GRAY.

Eight years ago I made the motion which made the Discipline as it is, a substitute for the report before the Committee on the State of the Church. To-day, out of a profound conviction, coming from the depths of my nature, I approve and support the majority report, because, after prayer, study, and reflection upon this subject, in a life of intimate personal association with young men and women, in the life and work of a Christian school that has always borne positive testimony against worldly amusements, and in the light that comes from a careful observation of the life of the Church itself, I am fully persuaded that this report offers the best practical solution of the various problems that are involved in this question. This report, brethren, does not lead us to say what we can do in order to bring worldly amusements into the Church and conform them to the rules of the Church. The vital question is rather, how shall we manage these forms of amusement, how shall we deal with them, which have become prevalent in the Church to a very large extent and which

are prevalent in the social sphere in which the work of the Church must be done if it is done at all, and in which the life of the Church must be manifested if it is manifested at all? This report, you will observe, does not bear equivocal testimony in regard to the nature or character or the final results upon character of indulgence in these forbidden forms of amusement, which have heretofore been in the penal code and under the ban of law. On the other hand, it enumerates these very forms of amusement, naming and placing them among the worldly diversions, which, because they can not be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus, are enervating to spiritual power and destructive of spiritual life. It goes farther than that. It recognizes the growing tendency in the Church and in the world towards these forms of amusement. It reaffirms the historic attitude of the Church toward these forms of amusement, and then earnestly advises all our people, old and young, wholly to abstain from all these forms of amusement and from every form of amusement which will paralyze Christian life and destroy Christian power.

Then it goes beyond that, and asserts the prerogative of the Church to deal by the Discipline with those who do not heed its positive precepts and these earnest entreaties! Now, my brethren, I ask you in all candor, as one who must answer to God and his fellows for all his teaching and life, speaking to you who must also stand before the judgment of God and the judgment of men, whether these simple forms of amusement that are forbidden should any longer be in the penal code? Shall we not place them among those advices that the Church gives to all who seek communion and fellowship among her people, rather than in a penal code that has never been enforced and probably never can be enforced? For thirty years this penal code has been in the Church, and for thirty years it has been wrapped in grave-clothes, dead as death itself, only waiting, it may be, for some hour when the Church, recognizing the relations of all these who are doing the great work in the world of saving souls, shall resurrect it into the form of life and power by some living gospel that will send it out in company with Jesus

Christ himself to form human character and mold human destiny, not by law alone, but by love as well.

DR. J. M. BUCKLEY.

I am a Puritan of the Puritans. If anything gave me an impulse to evil course from which, only by the grace of God and the prayers and expostulations of my friends, I was brought back, it was the attendance upon the theater. I know what the effect of that is upon a young man. In a number of years in the pastorate I found the tendency to dance, to attend balls, and to go to the theaters among the chief obstacles to the conversion of the youth, and the principal means of their backsliding after they were converted. The Catholics and the Lutherans and the Church of England people will never allow their people to dance or to go to the theater for forty days in every annual Lent. But they do not have any laws on the subject, not one of them. You can not find anywhere a law in the Roman Catholic Church or the Lutheran Church or the Church of England, or the Protestant

Episcopal Church, saying, "Thou shalt not." But the moral force of the body, together with religious exercises, sustains abstinence during Lent. Now I believe that Methodists ought to abstain every day in the year. But, Mr. President, the question is how best to make them abstain. There are probably not more than three persons in this house—there may be four—who had the opportunity of voting for or against this rule when it was put in. I am one of the four, or three or more, if there be more. I was then in the midst of a great war against the theater in the city of Brooklyn. A very great war, out of which grew a little book that General Fisk advertised in 1888, in his inimitable way, entitled "Christians and the Theater." Now I want to say that, then and there, when this rule was proposed, I voted against it because I foresaw what has come to pass. In the first place, the list was a very partial one, and all the people imagined that what is not prohibited in this list is allowed. There is nothing in the list to prohibit the billiard saloons, almost every one of which is connected with a bar, at the hotels.

There is not a word about the destructive rinks that ruin so many of our young people until the whole community arose and cast them out. There is nothing against prize-fights. There is nothing against the opera. Now observe, the text of the operas is on the average worse than the text of the ordinary drama. But there is not a word against the opera on this list. There is not a word against prize-fights, and a Sunday-school superintendent went to one on Coney Island, and when his pastor spoke against it, he pointed to the list, and said it was not there. And there is nothing against Sunday golf or bicycling or anything of that kind.

Moreover, let me say that if these were not here, we should have the law against amusements that are of a questionable or misleading tendency. It is not proposed to take that out. Yet our old General Rule was understood by everybody. Now I testify that my correspondence and experience, and all my observation, shows that the putting of this list in the presence of young people is a foe to a sound and discriminating and genuine conversion. They have to

look at it right in the face. I declare that I have not found a single case of trial and expulsion under it within the past fifteen years. I do not deny the existence of some. But I affirm that they are not numerous, while in many parts of the country they operate very peculiarly. Now we are told we must not take it out. I would say if these men, the majority, have not brought forth—[Time up.]

C. W. HARMON.

Mr. President, whence comes this demand for a change in Paragraph 248? Does it come from the aggressive spiritual forces of the Church? or from that element which is more anxious for the power of numbers and wealth than for the spiritual power which should be the glory of our Church? Is the demand an outgrowth of a highly spiritual condition, or is it rather an indication of the need of more consecrated devotion and sacrifice for the Church?

Some one says the intelligence of the Church demands a change; with equal authority I can say the spirituality of the Church demands no

change. Is there any one bold enough to say that we would hear anything about Paragraph 248 if the entire Church were in a state of spiritual fervor, and if great revivals were the rule rather than the exception? If there is no desire to change the historic attitude of our Church on this question, why make any change? It is said by some that we want to stand on the ground taken by the founder of our Church. Can it be denied that John Wesley denounced these specific amusements as harmful and injurious to spiritual life? If it is not intended to make these amusements permissible, do not change the paragraph. It is said that many good people are kept out of our Church by these specifications. Do we exist simply to gain in number? Have we not enough dead wood in our societies now? Shall we impair our peculiar and foreordained mission of saving souls and spreading Scriptural holiness for the sake of mere numbers? God forbid! It is also said the rule is ignored, and many members indulge in the proscribed amusements; does anybody dare propose to change Rule 30 because it is violated? The attitude of

our Church on this subject has saved millions of our people from a thousand snares, and is doing so to-day. Bishop Simpson once said that the time was not far hence when the Methodist Church must look to the Sunday-school for her recruits. It looks as though this time had arrived. Do we not as a Church owe a great obligation to our children and young people to speak in no uncertain sound on these questions? Some say we should leave these matters to the individual conscience of each member. Is it wise to do this with our children? Is it not rather the duty of the Church to guard our children and young people against those amusements which dwarf and sap the spiritual life and vigor? In the interests of our children and their spiritual life and growth, I oppose any elimination from this paragraph.

We have removed the shackles of the time-limit in the true spirit of progress; let us not progress backward in our attitude toward worldly amusements. In the language of St. Paul, let me say: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies

a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

J. W. BASHFORD.

I am in favor of the majority report. The difference between us, brethren, is not a difference of principle, but simply a difference in methods. No man who reads that majority report can fail to understand the attitude of our Church in opposition to ungodly amusements. We are told that the newspapers will misrepresent us upon this question if we adopt the majority report.

Brethren, the other day, after a discussion of two days, the majority report was adopted in the committee by a vote of 45 to 25, and the newspapers sent out reports throughout the nation saying that the Methodist Church does not abandon her historic attitude of hostility to the theater. The newspapers gave the substance and the spirit of that report, and they will not

misrepresent us if we do what is right upon this question. Almost every man who spoke—not every one, but almost every one—expressed regret that we had put this law in the penal code of the Church in 1872. If we made a mistake then, let us be brave enough and honest enough to correct that mistake at this time. I favor the majority report because the bishops, looking carefully over this question, have requested us to take this out of the penal code and put it in the chapter on special advices. I favor the majority report because it is a question of Protestantism against Catholicism. The very arguments you use to prove to your people that they ought not to do these things are an appeal to authority on one side and an appeal to principle on the other side. We have tried at the Ohio Wesleyan University to carry out the law with regard to theaters and dancing, and we have declared that students forfeit the privileges in the university by attending theaters, and we have carried out that declaration a score of times in the last ten years. But while we have tried to stand true to the Church, I assure you there is

a better way of dealing with the young people than the way proposed by the minority report. In the one case you threaten; in the one case you appeal to authority; in the one case you say "Thou shalt not." In the other case we appeal to principle, we rally manhood and womanhood on our side, and we can do vastly more with young people by appealing to their manhood than by going to them with threats. It is a question between the law and the gospel. The very argument you use to prove that you ought to maintain the penal code, that very argument could have been used against Jesus for abolishing the law by the gospel. Paul heard that argument from the men of his time, but he said, "Do we make void the law? God forbid. We fulfill the law," rather by appealing to principle. Because, therefore, we shall not be misrepresented if we carry out this law; because we have found the old law to be defective; because the list of amusements is not complete; because our attention is called to the matter by our chief pastors, the bishops, and we are asked to make this change; because we are appealing to the Protes-

tant spirit as against the Catholic spirit; because we are appealing to the gospel as against the law,—I am in favor of the majority report.

JOHN HANDLEY.

Brethren, I hold it is unfair, unjust, and unworthy of Christian brethren to impute to those who desire to remove this line from this paragraph a lower amount of spirituality and fervency and solicitude for the development of spiritual character than they represent. We are taught in the formula in which we receive probationers into our Church that the Scripture speaks of the Church as the household of God, and it is our desire to be as fair and as persuasive and as Christly with the children of God's family in God's household as with the children in our families in our own households. My heart, if you will pardon the personal allusion, has rejoiced over a letter that my little daughter in the normal school at Trenton has sent to me. When given a card of admission to see "The Christian," she said to the chaperone and the scholars, "My father does not desire me to attend theaters, and therefore I

shall not go." I sent up a prayer of thanksgiving that that daughter, who had never heard a mandatory thought from the father's lips, recognized his love and desire and solicitude for her welfare, and as I try to treat my own household I desire to treat the household of God. Should my daughter go to a place of amusement will I say to her, before and after, "I will drive you out of my home into the cold, sinful world, to wander away into degradation?" No; I love her all the more tenderly, and I leave the ninety and nine, and, with the help of God, go after the one sheep, and bring it back. Leave the door open wide for those that may for a moment make a mistake, but in their mature thought come back again. We are for building character, and then, as I believe that I can regulate the spirituality of my own home better than any other father, I believe the Methodist brethren in the Methodist Church can take care of those that differ with us on these lines better than those who desire to have them on the outside of our warm-hearted, persuasive Methodist Church. It is merely a mat-

ter whether we shall persuade them by love or compel them by force.

Then again, beloved, we are told here this morning that if we take this line out of this paragraph it is not removing the paragraph. It is merely a small portion that we believe ought not to be there. And we believe in this, but we believe the safest way to perfect our young Christians and our older Christians from going astray is to throw around them the kindly and persuasive indulgence, and Christly solicitude, and heavenly love. Then we are told that if we take this line out that the papers will take it up, and the Catholic Church will speak about it. I wish to say, brethren, that it makes no difference what may be the reputation of the Methodist Episcopal Church if her character is spiritual and sanctified. It makes no difference to a man who takes this platform what the world thinks of him, or what the Church may think of him, or what the bishops think of him, if he is true to his convictions and cables his heart to the heart of God. If he is with God, he is in the majority, and we are with the Lord Jesus Christ in main-

taining the same principle in the household of God that we maintain in our own households.

R. E. PATTISON.

Mr. Chairman and brethren, I appear to support the adoption of the majority report. After a stormy sail, under a heavy sky, it is about time we took a reckoning. The committee considered every memorial presented. There were two distinct propositions; first, those who wanted no change; second, those who wanted an entire change. For two days it was debated in the general committee. For two days a selected committee of fifteen took it under consideration, and finally submitted the report which is presented to you as a part of the majority report. I now submit to the Conference that this is in favor of neither one radical position nor the other. It was the best that could be secured after an earnest conference. It proposes no change in the Discipline. It does not retract one step as to the position of the Methodist Church upon the diversions prohibited by Article 248. The Judiciary Committee four years ago re-

ported these provisions as enumerated as unconstitutional, and if unconstitutional they should therefore be removed from the constitutional part of the Church rules and orders.

The enumerations were bodily taken out and put over under the chapter of advices. The chapter of advices is just as binding upon the members of the Church as the General Rules. [Cries of "No, no."] We are all committed to abide by the rules of our Church and to sustain them in each and every particular. Therefore, under the judgment of the committee, the specification of the items was taken over and put bodily in the chapter on special advices.

Now the whole purpose, as I understand the committee, is that the Church may not only emphasize its opinion as to this change by the removal, but also to enumerate and reiterate its declaration as to the history of the Church upon these enumerations. I am not here to argue as to the merits of the influence or spiritual effect, but purely upon a documentary position as to a particular article; and I do maintain that that is the whole issue in this proposition.

Methodism does not retract one iota from her position in reference to these enumerations. For one hundred and twenty-nine years under the General Rules the Church grew and prospered. We all concede that it was a mistake in 1872. [Cries of "No, no."] If a mistake in 1872 and a mistake now, then it ought to be corrected.

We ought to be sure we are right, and then go ahead. I am here to assert to you, gentlemen, that there will be more force and more effect in a practical proposition in the rules than an impractical and unexecuted one. The provision with reference even to prosecution for violation of the rule is preserved. There is a discretionary power. There must always be a discretionary power, or else the Church would be unwisely administered in the enforcement of Article 248. In the exercise of a discretion which is not permitted under the rules, the Church, through its ministry, has often looked on in silence and indifference to Article 248. Now we want to put it where it is practical, and where the minister, under the Divine command to love one another, admonishes kindly and gently; if

persisted in, he admonishes again; and then he has the right under this report to enforce the rule in reference to a prosecution. I therefore submit to you the adoption of the majority report.

NOTE.—I have taken these speeches just as I found them in the *Daily Christian Advocate*, and while they may have been incorrectly reported in some unimportant particulars, I think the meaning is sufficiently clear in the case of each speaker to enable us to arrive at a fairly correct conclusion concerning his position.

CHAPTER V.

OUR SPECIAL LEGISLATION ON AMUSEMENTS: HONEST DOUBT AS TO ITS WISDOM.

BY REV. G. P. MAINS, D. D.

IN THE METHODIST REVIEW, MAY-JUNE, 1892.

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AS THE eagle delights to breast the tempest, so some minds seem never so happy as when in an atmosphere of controversy. Such, however, is not the temper of the writer of this paper. I bring myself to write upon this subject not without apprehension that my convictions will collide with the sentiments of many worthy people in the Church. In this thought I experience no sense of pleasure.

I write because I believe that the section in our Discipline, inserted by the General Conference of 1872, presenting to the Church an authoritative *index expurgatorius* of amusements,

was a most grave blunder of ecclesiastical legislation. I believe that the effect of this distinctive enactment, and that almost without compensating feature, has been to damage and belittle the influence of our denomination.

Realizing the sensitive nature of the question before us, I venture, before entering upon its discussion, to ask the reader's attention briefly to one or two preliminary statements somewhat personal in their character. In what I have to say I appeal to the jury of reason, and not to that of prejudice. I write with no purpose to defend, and have no sympathy with, that which is questionable or wrong in practice. I am not personally addicted to any of the customs prohibited in the chapter of the Discipline under consideration. I have never been a dancer, never a theater-goer, never a card-player. My conception of the ideal Christian life is that, from first to last and in all of its relations, it is a sacred thing. The Christian is one whose ruling endeavor it should be in all things, whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he does, to do all to the glory of God.

I have often, however, had the feeling that in much of Church teaching the mistake has been made of taking narrow views of the legitimate sphere of the Christian life. All discerning and unbiased observation of healthy life must impress us that the instinct for amusement is just as surely divinely implanted as is any other aptitude of our being. In the language of Bishop Foss:

"We must frankly recognize the need of amusement. . . . God meant this for a happy world—I had almost said, a jolly world. Birds chant, lambs frisk, kittens gambol, brooks sing, and now and then 'mountains skip like rams,' and 'all the trees of the field clap their hands.' Play is the great business of young children and the urgent need of many a tired man."

"The urgent need of many a tired man," and woman, too. Has the Church given the philosophic and sympathetic recognition to this need in human nature which it merits? Is it not true that, in our desire to guard against the encroachment of evil amusements, we have failed to give either place or sympathetic recognition to that irrepressible, divinely implanted faculty out of which springs in every healthy human breast the

desire for amusement? Any faculty belonging to us is susceptible of abuse and misdirection. This is as true of the faculty of amusement as of any other. But the Church will take right and defensible grounds when it cheerfully recognizes that God may be just as certainly glorified in the legitimate use of the amusement faculty as in the use of any other faculty which he has given to man.

My second statement is: I would not assume to take the space of this *Review* for the statement of my own views upon the question under consideration if I had the slightest suspicion that these views are peculiar to myself alone. To satisfy myself concerning this I have personally sought the views of many representative men, both ministers and laymen, in our Eastern Methodism—it should be said in all fairness that I have done this without previous knowledge of the personal convictions of these men—and I have yet to find a single man who does not believe that the legislation in question was unwise, and that it never ought to have been embodied in our Discipline. I ought, perhaps,

further to state that I yield to none in the respect I carry for some of the names connected with this legislation, which itself enlists my opposition.

Daniel Curry was the chairman of the committee which framed and secured the passage of this legislation. His is one of the most mighty and commanding of the great personalities in our historic Methodism. From my earliest Conference relations to the day of his death I knew Daniel Curry, not always to agree with him, but always to feel toward him the profoundest veneration. The respect which I entertain for his great wisdom compels me doubly to interrogate my own humble views before committing them to the public. In discussing this question it will be my plan to present :

I. Objections to the legislation under consideration ; and

II. A suggestion of practical remedy for the mistakes of this legislation.

I. *This legislation is un-Protestant in its character.*

It is an accepted principle of Protestantism

that the Bible alone furnishes an authoritative and sufficient rule of faith both for the Church and the individual believer. The teaching of the Methodist Episcopal Church is:

"The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

We do not accept the Romish principle that in things spiritual, or in the sphere of conscience, the voice of the Church, as uttered either in the decrees of bishops or of councils, is an authority co-ordinate with the Word of God. Protestantism holds to no doctrine of priestly absolution; to no doctrine of priestly control over the efficiency of the sacraments; to no doctrine that places with any set of men the keys of authority between their fellow-men and the kingdom of heaven. It has one High Priest, Christ Jesus. It has one priesthood, the priesthood of the people. Protestantism emphasizes individual responsibility. It thrusts an open Bible into the hands of every believer, and not only concedes his right,

but bids him exercise the duty, of becoming himself the student of that Bible and the interpreter of its message to his own life. Protestantism has its creeds, its sacraments, its means of grace, its public teaching and exposition of the Word; but in its last court it leaves, as by all the force and logic of its position it must leave, the individual alone with God's Word and the Spirit which inspired that Word to settle all questions of personal conscience and salvation.

Manifestly it would be an inconsistency for a Church that concedes these fundamental principles to undertake to govern by a set of nursery rules all of its people, irrespective of their conditions of age, inheritance, environment, or education. A Protestant Church may preach the Word; may reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine; but when, through its councils, it undertakes to legislate authoritatively for the individual conscience, by so much it ceases to be Protestant, and is in spirit papal.

2. *The legislation objected to is unworthy of the rank and mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church.*

Methodism has come to be the ecumenical Protestantism. It has already held two world-representative Conferences,—one in the East, the other in the West. The Methodist Episcopal Church is by far the largest single factor in this world-wide Methodism. On its dominions the circling sun never sets. A Church the bugle-blasts of whose heralds are heard around the world ought not in this age to go to the nations with any petty legislation upon its statute-books. To say nothing, for the present, of the essential incompleteness and unwisdom of the legislation objected to, it would be unseemly for the legislators of the Methodist Episcopal Church to adopt statutes for the government of conduct and character which themselves do not clearly and soundly measure up to, and these, principles of universal application. A Church council not only does a needless thing, a thing that is sure to utter itself in the future in damaging reaction, but it well-nigh stultifies itself when, *ex cathedra*, it undertakes to particularize and to dogmatize in the sphere of debatable ethics. It is not the mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church to

undertake to save men by fencing them behind doubtful prohibitive statutes of conduct, but to carry to them a Gospel the spirit of whose life shall emancipate them from the law of sin and death. The rostrum whence this Church should utter its mission to nations should be seen, not on the level of the wilderness of the Exodus, but on the summit of the Mount of Beatitudes.

3. *This legislation is to be objected to on the ground that no General Conference is wise enough to legislate specifically for the government of individual Christian conduct.*

If this proposition seems to any too sweeping, or open to question, the objector would nevertheless do well to look at it twice rather than hastily condemn it as unsound. The very action in question, that of the General Conference in 1872, furnishes proof of the soundness of this principle as applied to itself in that it was unable to take its place in the Discipline without first encountering an earnest protest from some of the ablest and best men of that body. The history of the action shows that, at best, it was one of hasty legislation. But even then so conserva-

tive a man as Dr. Henry Slicer, of the Baltimore Conference, took occasion to utter his clear conviction as to the unwisdom of its adoption. It is a matter in evidence that one of our ablest of living bishops—a bishop when this action was taken—was outspoken in his sense of disapproval and sorrow that the Church should be committed to such an action. A statute, as to the wisdom of which equally wise and good men may be honestly divided in judgment, is not one to be exalted to the place of a universal law. The men who framed the action to which we object, and who, by a majority vote, secured its adoption as a law of the Church, undertook to lay down a rule of action for others in relations and positions in which very few if any of these law-makers themselves were ever called upon personally to act. By such course they not only seek to establish their views as law in relations where they have had little or no experience, but they absolutely leave to others who are called upon to confront these relations no discretion as to the exercise of their own individual conscience and reason in the presence of these relations.

And who does not know that uninspired ecclesiastical legislation for the government of the conscience and morals of men has always proven a failure? The ancient Jewish Churchmen had a most fruitful genius for amplifying statutes for the government of the religious life. But when Christ came, he spoke of such as they that "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." One of Christ's scathing arraignments of the Jewish Church consisted in the charge that it had made void God's law through acceptance of the traditions of men; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, thereby making the commandments of God of none effect.

The Romish Church for ages has assumed a censorship over the intellect and conscience of its subjects. It has made the decrees of popes and councils an authority co-ordinate with that of the sacred Scriptures. It has arrogated to itself the right to visit penal inflictions on those who dare to question its rule. In the exercise of

this flagrant assumption, and at a period when its authority was most widely accepted, it erected itself into one of the most terrific despotisms known in history. This Church, in its great care that none should stray from the fold, armed itself with engines of torture, employing the rack, the fagot, the sword, and the dungeon. It sent the bloodhounds of its Inquisition on the track of suspected heretics; it sent its detectives of conscience in disguise to palace and cottage; it so far succeeded in putting human thought under martial law that, for ages, the rule of this Church rested on the nations of Europe like the spell of some horrible nightmare. And yet this is the Church that makes the exclusive claim to absolute infallibility, especially in the realm of morals and of conscience! And what has been the outcome of it all? One result is, that this great Church, by substituting for the commandments of God the traditions of men—by displacing the Divine ethics with the dispensation of priestly indulgences—has practically and woeefully debauched the morals and the conscience of entire civilizations. The ecclesiastical factory

for the manufacture of statutes of conscience has never been a moral success.

To the Methodist Episcopal Church there has been committed no dispensation of new truth; nor can it lay claim to such special genius of moral statesmanship as to warrant its going into the business of framing extra-biblical statutes for the government of conscience. Its General Conference really has no qualification for such a task. This is a body whose sessions are characterized by stormy debates. It was never yet known to express an unreserved unanimous judgment on any question submitted for its decision. Such a body clearly has no competence for adding a new list to the second table of the moral law.

4. *The embodiment of this legislation in our Book of Discipline exposes the Methodist Episcopal Church to a damaging popular aversion.*

The grounds for the popular aversion to which I refer may be ill defined in the minds of many who share it. If so, this is no subject for wonderment. Multitudes of people carry impressions which sway their judgments and their

feelings almost with the force of convictions; yet if they were asked to furnish a rational justification for their impressions they would be utterly at a loss. That there is an impression abroad, especially in the great centers of population, that the Methodist Episcopal Church by its legislation on the amusement question has thus committed itself to a narrow policy, has thus announced itself as a Church constitutionally out of sympathy with human nature, is a fact which no intelligent observer can deny. Concerning the necessary exclusion of evil practices from the life of Church members the conviction of the average Methodist preacher or layman is probably not really more rigid than that of his brother in the corresponding rank in either the Presbyterian, Congregational, or Baptist denominations. But the Methodist Episcopal Church, as none of these, has signalized itself by special legislation on this question. A result is, that this Church is popularly thought of as the one Church that has put its official ban upon amusements. It matters not that this popular impression is indiscriminating. It exists; it is widespread. It

may be an impression as ill defined as the clouds; but, like the clouds, it carries in its bosom more or less of storm and of lightning, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, owing to its chosen singularity, gratuitously draws down upon its own head the discharge of this storm and lightning.

I have spoken of this condition of things as one damaging to the Church. The truth of this could be made to appear in many relations. The legislation herein objected to is susceptible of being converted into a bludgeon which the proselytism of another denomination may, and often does, use with injurious effect against us. It were devoutly to be wished that no such spirit of proselytism could find toleration among any of the religious denominations. But as yet Christianity has only imperfectly possessed many of its subjects; and at present, it must be confessed, the denominational zeal of some men, both ministers and laymen, unblushingly oversteps the bounds of a proper Christian courtesy.

More than once it has come to my knowledge, as doubtless the same thing has come to many

another Methodist pastor, that my Christian neighbors were using this peculiarity of my own Church, and with young people who properly belonged to my parish, as an argument against the assumption by these young people of membership in the Church of which I am a minister. And, whatever we may think of the motive for such zeal, the real embarrassment to us is, that the argument is often wielded with plausible and convincing force. These young people are effectively swayed by the same arguments which I would use before the lawmakers of my Church for the abrogation of this unpalatable legislation. Thus this action, without securing to Methodism any corresponding compensation, has placed freely in the hands of others the means for winning from us many who ought to be with us.

It is not only true that many are thus induced to go from us, but this legislation works embarrassment in the minds of young people who remain with us, by the undue prominence which it gives to the subjects of which it treats. The feeling is abroad among our own young people

that in some way the Methodist Episcopal Church is peculiar in its treatment of the amusement question. And so among the very first questions which the pastor has to meet when his young people advise with him about assuming the vows of Church membership is this, as to what the Discipline enjoins upon the subject of amusements. Not that the subjects forbidden may not, one and all of them, be proper subjects, when occasion arises, for a pastor's advice and counsel; but certainly there is no wisdom in so signalizing these things by special prohibitive statutes as to make them the most conspicuous things in the thought of young Christians as they approach the doors of Methodist Church membership.

In the initial steps of the Christian life would it not be more profitable that the minds of these young people should be filled with a few of the positive things which Christ requires in order to his glory, rather than that they should be so sharply challenged and diverted by a few things which the Methodist Episcopal Church has chosen to label as contraband?

5. *This legislation is to be objected to because it debars from membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church many most intelligent and conscientious Christians.*

The simple fact is, that the sweeping and indiscriminating prohibitions of this legislation do not carry with them the convictions of the most thoughtful people.

These prohibitions can not be elevated to the plane of universal moral principles. They undertake with reference to certain things to establish an artificial and a provincial conscience. They utter their condemnation in a wholesale way of some things concerning which some of the purest-souled young people of our day, young people reared in pure and beautiful homes, have no more been accustomed to think of as evil than they have been accustomed to think evil of the conversations which they hold with their own brothers and sisters.

My meaning will be sufficiently specialized in the general statement, that in the most approved society of many of the cities it is not uncommon for the young people to hold occasional

social evening gatherings in the parlors of their friends, and, as is most natural, a part of the time of these gatherings is passed in one form or other of amusement. Now, it may very probably happen that some of the amusements indulged in on such occasions bear the same names as some of those against which the Methodist Discipline has uttered its indiscriminating condemnation. But, nevertheless, these amusements are conducted under the eyes of parents and in homes whose social and moral atmospheres are most carefully guarded. Not only so, but many of the young people who are habituated to such associations, and who indulge in these amusements, are conscientiously Christian, and as such are passing up into manhood and womanhood to rank worthily with the most pure, morally aspiring, and God-fearing men and women of this or of any other generation. The moral quality of a thing does not depend so much upon the name it bears as upon the time, the associations, the motives, under which it takes place. These young people have been accustomed to indulge in amusements bearing certain names under con-

ditions that have brought them pleasure, not harm. It is manifest that the convictions of such young persons can not be made to subscribe to indiscriminating condemnation of such amusements as either wise or right. They can not be made to believe that these amusements, as they have been accustomed to them, are wrong; indeed, they feel certain that they are not wrong. And yet the Methodist Episcopal Church gives to such no alternative but either to subscribe to that as wrong which they do not themselves believe to be wrong, or else to remain outside of its membership.

As I write these lines there has fallen into my hands, as by a strange opportuneness, a letter from one of the most cultured, devoted, and influential of New England Methodist laymen. This letter was not designed for my eye, and was written with no thought of publicity. Its author is the successful conductor of a large Bible-class. Among other things, he says:

"I have a young man in my Sunday-school class. . . . Some time ago I asked him if he did not feel that it was a duty which he owed to God and himself publicly to announce himself as a follower of the Sa-

vior, and become a member of the Church. He said frankly that he did, but that he could not do it, for that in so doing he should practically say that he believed things were wrong in which he saw no wrong, and that he was told he could not do this and could do that, and while perhaps he did not care to do the one or the other he could not consent to put himself in a false position."

This gentleman continues:

"I talked and argued the case to the best of my ability, but to no manifest result. He makes no profession of religion now, but I honestly think he has more of the real spirit of Christ in his heart than—well, than some others—perhaps myself included."

Presumably my own pastoral experience in this matter is not exceptional. In my present pastorate I have failed to secure the membership of at least three most excellent young persons, and for the reason that they could not make themselves believe that for them certain things are wrong which our Discipline formally declares to be such, and they were at the same time too honorably conscientious to accept membership in a Church with whose rules they are not in agreement. But all three of these have sought membership in neighboring Churches, where they are developing into the finest types of Christian char-



acter and usefulness. And the thing to be emphasized is that which held these young people in self-exclusion from membership in the Methodist Church was not a thing discreditable to their Christian character, but rather a quality worthy of all commendation. They exercised their own right of thought, and at the same time were too conscientious to place themselves in a false position. Had they been less thoughtful and less conscientious they might now be in the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The rule thus operates as a winnowing-fan which winnows out and away from us some of the most valuable material for Church membership.

The effect upon the welfare of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the conditions discussed in this section of my paper is more far-reaching than is at first easily measured. These conditions are among those that bear gravely upon the problem of the social and moral standing of our denomination, especially in the great centers of population and of power. I know that some would dismiss this whole matter by saying that the Methodist Episcopal Church is better off

without than with such persons in its membership as I have described above. But I can not believe that any wise person, with a full knowledge of the facts in his possession, would rest content in such a view.

6. *This legislation is to be objected to because, on account of its failure to carry with it the convictions of many who are in the membership of the Church, it is practically a dead letter, and as a measure of discipline can not be enforced.*

If clearly and beyond debate the provisions of this legislation were obviously wise and right, then, however practically ignored by any, they ought to stand. But as a matter of fact there are great numbers in the Church who believe neither in the wisdom nor in the legitimacy of such legislation. Practically there are many Church members in Methodism whose lives are no more governed by this legislation than though it did not exist. This is simply to say that, in matters of personal conduct, these persons elect to act by their own judgment rather than to be governed by prohibitive statutes in the wisdom

of which they do not believe. That so long as these statutes remain many of these persons stand in the Church in the attitude of lawbreakers is not to be denied. Their position in this respect it is not my purpose to defend.

Legal consistency would seem to require that all in a Church should cheerfully conform to its laws, or else withdraw themselves from its membership. If, however, this consistency should suddenly have sway, it would result in a vast elimination from the present membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The simple fact is, that the spirit and freedom of the age are against all such Church legislation. And by this I do not mean necessarily that spirit and freedom of the age which minister to depraved and unregenerate tastes. Here, for instance, are a man and a woman, parents, blessed with a family of bright boys and girls growing up to take places in society. That family life is planted in the center of a certain social structure. This structure represents, on the whole, the best culture and the best character of the age. The very environment of this family is itself largely shaped

by certain ideas and usages of society—ideas and usages which themselves grow out of the best life of that society. Now what, in these given conditions, are these parents to do? Are they to exercise their own judgment as to what kind of associations and amusements they will permit to their children in the society where they must rear them? Or will they be content to abide the positive instructions in this matter of some ecclesiastical council—instructions, it may be, framed by men who themselves never had to face the practical problem which these parents have to face? Of course, there is but one answer to these questions. These parents must work out their own problem as best they can. But in doing this, the probabilities are that they will permit some things which the sweeping and indiscriminating letter of the statutes condemns. Suppose, now, that these parents were summoned to trial. What would be the result? The shades of the Committee on the State of the Church in the General Conference of 1872 might vote to condemn them; but certainly, on the intrinsic merits of their action, the enlightened Christian

jury of the age would give a verdict of acquittal. It is doubtless sadly true that many in the Church who violate these statutes are not as conscientiously careful concerning their personal conduct as they ought to be. But it is equally true that many who in form violate these requirements are not in spirit lawbreakers. These really constitute a pronounced section of the best grown manhood and womanhood of the Church. But without attempting to characterize the motives of any, the truth remains that this legislation on amusements is, because practically unreceived into the convictions of our Church membership, so far a dead letter that its disciplinary requirements can not be enforced. The statutes of this legislation are entered in the Book of Discipline under the "Trial of Members" section. But if any Methodist pastor—certainly in the older and more populous sections—should undertake to bring to trial a member for violation of these statutes, he would do little more than to plunge his people into a seething turmoil and make himself the target of public ridicule. The question recurs: Is it wise to retain in the Book of Disci-

pline of the greatest Protestant Church of this age legislative edicts of conduct in the legitimacy of which many of the members of this Church not only do not believe, but which themselves are so far a dead letter that their disciplinary claims can not be enforced?

7. *Many persons now in the Church might justly object to this legislation as an impertinent infringement upon their rights of membership.*

For all members who joined the Methodist Episcopal Church prior to 1872, the matter of what amusements they should accept or refuse, if any, was left where it ought always to be left, with their individual conscience and judgment. For all these this legislation undertakes, at a stroke, to change the law of membership in the Church which they joined. When they joined this Church it was, in this very matter of amusements, truly a Protestant Church, leaving all decisions on this question to be settled between the individual and his Lord; but these persons all wake up one morning to find that, because of a bare majority vote of a General Conference, they are, in this respect, members of a different

Church from that which they joined. It is a matter perhaps worthy of serious thought to ask, whether the high proprieties of the case do not debar any General Conference from legitimately taking such action?

8. *But, finally, on the assumption that this legislation is wise and in the right direction, it must still be said that it is incomplete and insufficient in its terms, and should be so supplemented and developed as logically to meet the full requirements of the wide situation.*

If we must so far distrust the teaching functions of our ministry, the conscientiousness and common sense of our people, as to make the adoption of a black-list of forbidden amusements a necessity for the guidance of the Church, then that list certainly ought to be characterized by some degree of completeness. Since it is assumed, in order that we go right in such matters, that we should have definite official instructions, we ought perhaps to be informed as to whether it is right or wrong for Christians to attend a prize-fight. But on the other hand, if

we are to have a list of forbidden amusements, it is equally important that we should be favored with a list of amusements that are permissible. Nobody in this day will deny the legitimacy of and the necessity for amusements. And if we are to sail by a General Conference chart, the same chart that locates the hidden rocks and the dangerous shoals ought to line out clearly the safe channel. This policy, I am aware, indicates no end of trouble. The General Conference, instead of sitting for a month once in four years, would need to be in continuous session. The age is inventive. The devil is constantly devising new evil amusements. It seems clear that the General Conference would have to employ professional experts to decide on the moral quality of amusements.

But to what does all this point save to the absolute impracticability and folly of leaving this whole question other than where it properly belongs; namely, under the cover of some general principle—a principle that will admit of moral exposition by the Christian teacher, but the appli-

cation of which shall in every case be left where it properly belongs, with the individual conscience?

II. A partial list of objectionable features of the special legislation by the General Conference of 1872 has now been entered. The remedy which I propose for the condition which I regard as unfortunate is simple. It is that the General Conference of 1892 abrogate the entire action on this question taken in 1872.

I am aware that some who would like to take this step feel that we can not do it without damage. There is doubtless force in this view. It is not an easy thing for a great Church, before the eyes of all the world, to take the back track for the undoing of its former work. But it would be both Christian and statesman-like for us frankly to correct the admitted mistakes of former legislation. Besides, we shall suffer greater damage by going on in a wrong path than we can by retreat. If we are on untenable and dangerous grounds, the sooner we return to rational principles the better will it be for the

Church, and the more certain will we be to secure for ourselves the approbation of all right judgment.

The step advised is one which commends itself for the following reasons:

1. This action would remand the whole question to that broad Christian principle first formulated for Methodism by its founder, John Wesley, a man whose peerless wisdom as an ecclesiastical legislator was only equaled by his saintliness of character. This principle simply asks of the members of the Methodist societies that they shall take only "such diversions as can be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." This principle covers wisely and adequately the whole question, and is in itself all the legislation on this question that any Church in Christendom will ever need to the end of time.

2. This principle, standing by itself, as the only utterance of the Church, would have the merit of simplicity. Everybody could comprehend it; nobody could forget it.

3. This principle is comprehensive. There

is no amusement, and could be none, to which it would not apply, and concerning which it would not be an entirely sufficient rule.

4. This principle is universal, and would never need revision. It is as suitable to one age as to another; as applicable to Christians in China as to Christians in America.

5. This principle is practically undebatable. It can not fail of indorsement by all rightminded people of the Methodist Episcopal Church, or of any other Church.

6. This principle takes the highest ground possible on the question at issue, placing it where it properly belongs, on the individual conscience.

7. Finally, there is no test, of which I can conceive, which this principle will not fully meet. In its simple comprehensiveness it says all that the Church can properly say upon the subject.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, in its General Conference of 1872, undertook to supplement this principle by specific statutes.

These statutes, as they stand to-day, are regarded by many as an impertinence in our Church law. They are so wanting in the genius of com-

mon sense as to be unable to carry themselves as ruling convictions into the lives of many unquestionably good people.

As they stand they place many members of the Church in the attitude of lawbreakers, not to say of deliberate hypocrites.

Let us sweep away this rubbish, and in its place re-enthroned as supreme a principle which invites nobody's contempt, but which is eminently adapted to make the members of our Church thoughtful and conscientious.

NOTE.—In a personal interview with Dr. Mains I recently obtained his permission to include the foregoing article (which, by the way, is the ablest argument in favor of the repeal of the amusement clause which has yet appeared) in this publication.

For this privilege I desire to express my hearty appreciation of the Doctor's kindness; and while I can not agree with him in the position which he takes upon this question I am glad to be able to place his views before the reader.

It is understood that the publication of the article here does not in any way interfere with the Doctor's copyright.—H. B.]

CHAPTER VI.

ON TEARING DOWN THE BARS.

RESERVE DELEGATE, ORTHO DOXY, HAS
SOMETHING TO SAY.

(PUBLISHED IN THE OMAHA BEE, MAY 24, 1892.)

To Judge Earnest B. Liever, General Conference, Omaha, Neb.:

DEER FRIEND---I am feelin purty bad agin, an so is Hanner, my wife. I am not sufferin from any bodily alement, but I'm awl mixed up in my mind. . . . I expect the spellin will be wuss than common, but I must onboozum myself. . . . Ye see it come onto us very sudden, an wuz so different from anything that we had any reason to expect from a Methodist Preacher that it wuz jis like gittin nocked over with a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. This is how it happend.

Sam, my hired man, wuz bringin' in the eggs last evenin', and I wuz a comin' in from the barn

at the same time, when our preacher drove up in his buggy an' handed Sam the last number of the *Methodist Review*. It is a marvel to me an' Hanner, how Sam kin git so interested in that maggyzeen, but he jist devours it from beginnin' to end, an' then seems as if he wanted to holler comfortably around the center table in the settin'-but then we're gitten old. . . .

Well, after supper was over an' the chores wuz awl dun, Hanner got her nitten, an' I got the evenin' paper an' then we settled ourselves comfortably around the center table in the settin'-room.

Sam wuz out at the barn when we sot down, but purty soon he cum in an' in a few minits he wuz sittin' with his slippers on, an' in his hand wuz that *Review*. . . .

Awl wuz quiet for a spell, Hanner a-makin' her nittin needles click along in fine shape, an' Sam and me a-readin'. . . .

Awl at once Sam giv' a angry snort, jumped to his feet, handed me that *Review* an' said in a tone of mingled indignation an' disgust: "If that don't beat the Dutch an' the Dagoes then

I'm willin' to curry the hosses with my Sunday close on, silk hat an' awl. 'There's a article by a Methodist Doctor of Divinity. Read it." . . .

I looked at the article an' read the title which wuz:

"Our special legislation on amusements: Honest doubt as to its wisdom."

Then Sam spit out the remnants of a toothpick which he had chewed awl to pieces an' remarked: "That's the way with awl them douters, evry mother's son of 'em begins by sayin' he's honest."

I waited a minit, an' as he didn't say nothin' more on that pint I started on with my readin' as follers:

"As the eagle delights to breast the tempest, so some minds seem never so happy as when in an atmosphere of controversy."

Here I stopt to clear my throte, an' Hanner sed: "Why he starts out real nice. I think that sentence is real purty with the eagle in it. I declare if it don't set my mind to soarin' right away."

That's Hanner's way, awlways tryin' to put in a good word, but Sam kep' trampin' around.

I red a few more lines in which the Doctor says he ain't a-writin' for the fun of it, or words to that effect, an' then I come to this :

"I write because I believe that the section in our Discipline, inserted by the General Conference of 1872, presenting to the Church an authoritative *index expurgatorius* of amusements, was a most grave blunder of ecclesiastical legislation."

At this pint Hanner stopt nittin to remark: "My sakes alive! is it possible they done such a dretful thing as that an' we never heard of it before? Why I thot nobody but the Catholics believed in purgatory. An' now he tells us that the General Conference of 1872 giv the Church some kind of a purgatory for amusement!"

Then Sam stopt walkin', looked at Hanner with a respeckful smile, an' sed: "Beg pardon, but you must remember that it is agin the law for a great towerin' preacher with a D. D. tacked onto his name to write a article without mixin' a little Greek or Latin into it. It wouldn't pass muster nohow if it didn't smell a little of some

dead lingo. When he says '*index expurgatorius* of amusements' he means to say a list of prohibited amusements, I guess."

"O, that 's it," sed Hanner; "but what amusements did that General Conference prohibit?"

"Let him tell," sed Sam, as he nodded at the article, an' I red on till I struck this:

"I am not personally addicted to any of the customs prohibited in the chapter of the Discipline under consideration. I have never been a dancer, never a theater-goer, never a card-player."

When I red that Hanner seemed dazed for a fraction of a second, an' then she sed: "Does that Methodist Preacher mean to say that the General Conference of 1872 blundered when it prohibited them things?"

"That 's what he does," shouted Sam, "an' accordin' to his notion it blundered when it prohibited goin' to circuses, an' hoss-races an' other things of the same sort. Fact is," he continued, "the Methodist Church has been a-blunderin' right along through its hull history, if his position is correct. It blundered when it prohibited slave-holdin', an licker-sellin', an' drinkin', among

the members, an' it blundered when it sed that it would n't take in any more preachers that smoked, or chawed an' spit tobacker around." . . .

Then Sam sot down, an' I red along till I come to this:

"Protestantism emphasizes individual responsibility. It thrusts an open Bible into the hands of every believer, and not only concedes his right, but bids him exercise the duty of becoming himself the student of that Bible and the interpreter of its message to his own life. Protestantism has its creeds, its sacraments, its means of grace, its public teaching and exposition of the Word; but in its last court it leaves, as by all the force and logic of its position it must leave, the individual alone with God's Word and the Spirit which inspired that Word to settle all questions of personal conscience and salvation. Manifestly it would be an inconsistency for a Church that concedes these fundamental principles to undertake to govern, by a set of nursery rules, all of its people, irrespective of their conditions of age, inheritance, environment, or education."

"Shades of Aristotle an' Bacon!" shouted Sam. "If that chunk of logic would n't demolish that terrible *index expurgatorius* it must be tremenjus tuff. How easy he slips from Protestantism in general to Protestantism in particular, or to a particular Protestant Church! O yes, Protestantism concedes every feller's right to think

for hisself, an' every Protestant Church concedes the same thing, an' when a feller has done some thinkin' an' is reddy to jine a Church, Protestantism leves him perfectly free to go into the one he likes best; an' when he gits into one, if he finds that it do n't fill the bill accordin' to his notions, why Protestantism leaves him jist as free to go out as he was to go in. Protestantism don't compel a feller to jine a Church, nor it do n't compel him to stay in if he do n't want to, but when he does go into a Church, an' while he stays there, Protestantism, an' common sense, an' old-fashioned honesty, awl unite in sayin' that if he has got three-sevenths of a grain of true manhood in his make-up, then he'll mind the rules of the particular Church he belongs to. An' the idee that it is un-Protestant to make rules in a Church for the government of the conduct of its members is squarely contradicted by awl Protestant history. . . . If the General Conference can't put its foot on some of the devil's most dangerous social institootions, an' if it can't be allowed to put up a fence of 'prohibitive statutes' to keep young an' inexperienced lam's an' skittish old

sheep from wanderin' off into the dangerous swamps an' jungles of sin, where they are liable any minit to fall into the traps of Satan or git ketched by some of his bloodthirsty beasts of prey, then what is the General Conference good for anyway? If it mussn't put anything into the Discipline that relates to the conduct of its members, then what may it put into it?"

By this time Sam was onto his feet an wuz a trampin' around putty lively. "O well," he sed as he pulled out his jackknife an' begun to pare his finger nales in frunt of the stove, "I reckon the right thing for the General Conference to do will be to fill up the Discipline with some rules on how to play pergressive euker, or to git up home theatrics for the benefit of the babes that ain't yit stout enuff to digest the strong meat of the prayer-meetin'. Then, if that ain't enuff, it might yank that *index expurgatorius* out of the place where Dr. Curry an' his honored associates in the General Conference of 1872, put it, an' substitoot in its sted some of the most approved rules for man-agin' a hoss race!"

Then I went on agin with my readin', an'

Sam sot down an' listened in silence till I reached this :

"A Church, the bugle blasts of whose heralds are heard around the world, ought not in this age to go to the nations with any petty legislation upon its statute books."

"Petty legislation !" roared Sam, as he grabbed up the poker an' punched the fire with tremenjuss energy. "Petty legislation !" he farely thundered ag'in, as he tost the poker into the woodbox an' begun to march around like a officer in battle. "So it is 'petty legislation' to make a law ag'in' theaters, an' balls, an' cards, an' circusses, an' hoss-races, is it? It is unworthy of the rank an' mission of the Church to do a thing like that, is it? But I reckon it is a good deel more worthy of the rank an' mission of the Church to do that than it is for a member of the Church to trot off to the theater five nites in a week, or stay up a-playin' pergressive euker, or a-trippin' 'the light bombastic toe' till 2 o'clock in the mornin', if he kin only persuade hissself to believe that it ain't no great harm! This is a great country, this is, with its Declaration of Independence, its Constitootion, its Bunker Hill Monument, its

Yanky-doodle, an' its Star-spangled Banner. But if I'm not mistaken, some of the states has made a law an' put it into ther statute books that a feller that intentionally shoots a turkey-buzzard has got to pay a fine, an' I have heard of a law that wouldn't allow a feller to ship a lousy steer or a mangy hoss in from Texas, or from any other place. Too bad that a state should indulge in any such 'petty legislation' when it could hev kep up its dignity so much better by a-wavin' the flag an' a-playin' Yanky-doodle! Yes, it's too bad that Dr. Curry ever got that *index expurgatorius* agin theaters an' hoss-races into the Discipline. He might hev knowed that it would hev a embarrasin' effectt on them hi-toned 'heralds' that are a-tootin' ther bugles in the fashionable Methodist Churches of the big cities, where, accordin' to that writer, some of the flock are everlastingly jumpin' over them *index expurgatorius* bars to git away an' have a good time. Yes, them same bars must be took down I reckon, or some of them fine-wooled sheep of the Brooklyn flock will hurt ther constitootions a-jumpin' over 'em."

Seein that Sam had come to a period, I red on till I struck this objection :

“This legislation is to be objected to on the ground that no General Conference is wise enough to legislate specifically for the government of individual Christian conduct.”

I went on through purty nigh two pages under this objection in which the writer argys that nothin’ ort to go into the Discipline unless the hull General Conference, big an’ little, preachers an’ laymen, goes in for it. At least that’s what I made out of it, for he says in one place :

“A statute, as to the wisdom of which equally wise and good men may be honestly divided in judgment, is not one to be exalted to the place of a universal law.”

When I paused a moment before readin’ the next objection, Sam, who was settin’ down agin, remarkt: “If the Discipline was to be revised accordin to that fool notion it would make a hole in it big enuff to bury awl the religion of them theater-goin’ Christians in, an’ then ther would be room enuff for a dog or two on top. Any feller that’s ever done any strait thinkin’ on this line knows that some of the best laws that was

ever enacted was passed after a hard fite by a bare majority."

Then I red on till I come to this objection:

"The embodiment of this legislation in our Book of Discipline exposes the Methodist Episcopal Church to a damaging popular aversion."

When I red this, Sam got riled up, he did, an' when I stopt he said: "If there's anything in awl creation that I despise with awl my sole it's this continual whimperin' by this class of D. D.'s (dandy doubters) because something or other in the Methodist Church is unpopular! For the special benefit of some of them star preachers, the great commission ort to be revised so as to read: 'Go you into awl the world an' preach the gospel to every critter, but don't say anything that will make you unpopular!'" . . .

When I laid the *Review* onto the table, Haner heaved a si, an' paused in her nittin to say: "Well, well; an' so he thinks the Church kin git along without no bars! I wonder how he would manage to take care of the flock without 'em?"

"O," sed Sam, as he leaned back in his chair, "that's easy enuff. He don't need no bars, nor no

fences to perfect the Methodist fold. What he recommends is that every spiritual shepherd shall git onto his ecclesiastical hoss, an' turn his flock out onto the theological an' social range, an' hurd 'em accordin' to his own peculiar notions. If he thinks the feed is poor down on the race-track, or that the salt in the theatrical troff is mixed with stricknine, or that the grass is short in the circuss ring, why, then, he kin ride around lively an' keep 'em away from them places; but if he is one of them 'liberal' shepherds that thinks that it won't hurt the young lams to gambol around the card-table, or hop about in the ballroom, pervided they don't hev no *index expurgatorius* bars to jump over, why then he kin let 'em foller ther own sweet will, an' they kin go tumblin' down into the burnin' desert of perdition, or they kin round up in the beautiful medders of paradise, jist as it may happen!"

Then his face took on a more serious look, an' his voice was husky, as he continued:

"Even if we admit that it was a mistake to put that *index expurgatorius* into the Discipline—which we don't—yet it would be a thousand

times wuss to take it out again; for it has bin in ther twenty years, an' everybody knows about it, an' the very minit that the General Conference takes it out the wires will flash the news awl over the world, an' the secular papers will print it in great big headlines an' say: 'Glorious victry over fanaticism! Liberalism to the front! The great Methodist Episcopal Church endorses the theater! The General Conference expunges the last vestige of Puritanical legislation from its Book of Discipline! Methodists in good standing may now play cards, dance, and go to the theater under ther own vine an' fig-tree, with none to molest or make them afraid!' An' then they'll go on an' tell all the particulars, an' lavish praises on the fellers that carried it through, an' call the others a set of pharasaical pretenders to sooperior sanctity. If that time ever comes, it will be a cold day for Methodism; but I don't believe that the Methodist Episcopal Church is ready to shake hands with the devil yit, an' I most certainly hope that the great *Methodist Review* won't have any more articles in it like that."

Then he got up, an' after he had drunk a cup

of hot ginger tea he went to bed. When he was gone, Hanner put away her nittin an' sed: "Now, Ortho, I want you to git up in the mornin' an' write a letter to the judge down ther to Omaha, an' tell him that we want him to stand up for the Discipline as it is, an' tell him not to let the General Conference tare down them bars."

So I have wrote. Fraternally,

ORTHO DOXY.

P. S. Tell the folks I'm no relation to Hetty Ro Doxy.

CHAPTER VII.

REASONS AGAINST REPEAL.

REV. JAMES MUDGE, D. D.

(FROM THE METHODIST REVIEW, MAY-JUNE, 1898.)

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THE history of the case before us in brief is this: During the first century of Methodism on these shores there was very little, if any, trouble with respect to indulgence in sinful amusements on the part of members of our Church. The Methodist attitude of unswerving antagonism to the dance, the theater, and such like things, was perfectly understood, and participation in them was not dreamed of as possible to a consistent follower of John Wesley; he was expected to forswear them as a matter of course.

But as the wealth of the Church increased, fashionable follies began to intrude, and there appeared a class of members—members by inherit-

ance rather than conviction—who claimed that there was no reason why they should be denied the fleshly enjoyments granted to those in certain other communions. This state of things alarmed some wise leaders of the Church, who were closely watching the signs of the times, and who were rightly jealous for the maintenance of the Methodist type of Christianity. They saw there was danger of a gradual breaking down of the barriers against worldliness which the fathers had fittingly raised, and they felt that the time had fully come for more distinctly defining what had always been the very decided but somewhat indefinitely expressed position of the Church. Action was accordingly taken by the General Conference of 1872. The great Committee on the State of the Church, including some of the foremost men of Methodism, brought in a carefully formulated report, entitled “Sinful Amusements,” in which they say:

“Your committee has considered a large number of memorials and petitions from members of the Church in different sections of the land, deploring the sinful amusements too often indulged in by members of the Church; also many resolutions and pastoral addresses

emanating from Annual Conferences and other official bodies belonging to our own and sister denominations. Influenced by these, as well as by their own personal observations, your committee is of the opinion that there is just cause for alarm, and a necessity for General Conference action, in order to arrest, if possible, practices which portend so much evil to the Church and to the world. The General Rules of our Church prohibit such diversions as can not be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . . This rule is sufficiently comprehensive, but not explicit enough to meet the wants of the times."

The committee therefore recommended that the chapter on imprudent conduct be altered to read as we have it now.

Their report was adopted by a count vote of one hundred and seventy-nine to seventy-five, or more than seven to three.

Nothing further was heard of the matter in General Conference for twenty years. All appeared satisfied. In 1892 memorials were presented asking for a revision of the paragraph on "Imprudent and Unchristian Conduct." But the representative Committee on the State of the Church, comprising more than a hundred members, reported almost unanimously that there was no sufficient reason for making any change. Only

eleven members signed a minority report, which proposed to strike out the objectionable lines. The two reports did not reach the Conference, but no one claims that the vote there would have been greatly different from what it was in the committee. Four more years passed. The agitation went briskly on, and plentiful assertions were loudly made that this "mediæval relic," as it was facetiously termed, these "provincial prescriptions," would be promptly swept away when the General Conference met. But again the Committee on the State of the Church reported that it was not advisable to make any change in the Discipline on this point. There was no minority protest this time. But the matter came to a vote in the full Conference after a big debate—a standing vote—and, though no count was made, it was perfectly plain to all that the majority was overwhelming for the retention of the chapter in its present shape. In other words, after the lapse of twenty-four years the sentiment of the Church has not materially altered from what it was in 1872. It is very evident, however, that the advocates for a different order of things have still

some hope, in spite of their repeated defeats, and that the agitation is to be kept up. Hence the call for a clear statement on our part of the reasons why the Methodist Episcopal Church has hitherto refused, and, we confidently believe, will continue to refuse, to grant the request of those who wish to remove from the Discipline all explicit, unmistakable condemnation of the theater, the dance, and the card-table. The main reason for the refusal, as we understand it, is this, that the repeal of the statute would inevitably and universally be understood as a sanction of the sinful practices referred to, as an encouragement of worldliness, as a lowering of the standard which for more than a century the Methodist Episcopal Church has grandly borne aloft. The rescinding of the rule would be in effect an indorsement of the things previously pronounced against. Nothing could possibly prevent this very natural construction being everywhere put upon it. No amount of guarding, or denying, or explaining, no number of curious circumlocutions, or glittering generalities, or ambiguous evasions in other parts of the Discipline, could destroy or

materially change this result. The whole country would take this view of it, and would have a right to. A shout of delight, if not of derision, would go up from every secular paper throughout the land, from every variety show, every dance-hall, every gambling-hell. The action would be hailed with glee as a signal triumph by all those who are addicted to the pleasures that minister to the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and by all those who wish to see our Church drawn nearer in its standard of living to those other denominations that are less thoroughly evangelical and evangelistic. It would be felt as a blow by most of those who are striving, amid many difficulties, to uphold the spiritual tone of the Church and to beat back the swelling tides of worldly conformity. They could not fail to feel discouraged and rebuked by it. And we can not afford, in these times especially, to do anything in our legislation that will strengthen the party of self-indulgence, that will make it easier for people who do these things to quiet their conscience in regard to them; easier for this class of members to multiply; easier for the stricter class to conclude that they can

serve God better in some other communion which has less of wealth and social prestige. It is hard enough now—in view of the vast sums spent on church music, church flowers, and similar ecclesiastical decorations and delectations; in view of the great difficulty found in paying off our missionary debt and extending the sphere of our missionary operations; in view of the almost utter extinction of the class-meeting in so many quarters, together with the decline of the prayer-meeting and other allied signs of the times—for the more devout portion of the Church to feel that Methodism has not considerably declined in true godliness and thoroughgoing consecration. It would be much harder if this further step in the same direction were taken. The time is anything but propitious for the taking of such a step. Many Episcopal Addresses from our chief pastors in recent years have called attention to the “alarming excesses of luxury and worldliness in the Churches,” and the “danger that they crush out vital piety.” The bishops declare there is a call for “firm, clear, bold, unsparing condemnation of manifestly demoralizing amusements.” Their

address to our General Conference of 1896 had this paragraph:

“With an intense and ever-growing aversion to all that deteriorates the spiritual life of the Church, we lift up a voice of warning against the increasing prevalence of amusements that are deleterious to our spiritual power. . . . We sincerely desire that the action of this General Conference may be such as to awaken the conscience of the whole Church to the perils rising from inconsiderate indulgences in harmful pleasures. The press of the Church should speak out on this subject, and the ministers should lay down the law of the Church, the teaching of Scripture, and the sad illustrations of history, till the whole Church shall be sensitively alive on the subject.”

At the previous General Conference, 1892, an important committee report said:

“The tendency to indulge in various amusements, either incompatible with the Christian life or a serious impediment to it, greatly increases.”

This being confessedly the case, how plain the conclusion that deliberately to enlarge this world-loving class of members by taking away at their demand what they regard as an embarrassment to worldly indulgence would be a very serious mistake! Our true strength as a Church does not lie that way. We can better afford to lose the few

whose attachment to the pleasures of this life appears to be so exceeding great, rather than to retract or lessen our testimony against the withering influence of these pleasures. Our future depends more on our strict guarding of morals and spirituality than on our catering to wealth and fashion, or even to culture. The retention or accession of some who are rich or educated will be secured at too high a price if, as a condition of their coming to us or staying with us, we yield to their insistence for a radical change in our time-honored policy. It would be preferable for us to let them go to communions where they will feel more at home—communions that have always been less rigid than our own—rather than to forfeit our peculiar glory.

As the bishops reminded us in their 1876 Address: "The true Church has always preached the gospel to the poor. This has been characteristic of Methodism throughout its history."

We have had a relation to revivals and to the evangelization of the masses that is unique. That relation has fastened upon us special responsibilities. If we renounce or neglect them, by legis-

lation solely in the interests of a few, we shall be untrue both to our history and our destiny. More than anything else we need, to fulfill our mission, the incoming of a mighty tide of Divine power, a signal baptism of the Holy Ghost; we need that the fires of purification and self-sacrifice should blaze upon our altars.

It is not claimed, we think, that the proposed legislation will have favorable influence in this direction. It is very evident to most of us that its effect will be precisely the opposite; that instead of promoting the religious life and increasing faith, love, and self-denial, it will tend toward self-indulgence, and minister to a decline in true devotion. If this be so; if it will lead the youth of the Church to conclude that they have been Puritanic and prudish and overprecise, stricter than was needful in regard to these worldly diversions; that it is good form to go occasionally to such as are high-toned; that it is fanatical and foolish and illiberal and imbecile to refrain from or oppose these things altogether; that only ignorant, "illiterate Christians," who have "factitious and ascetic notions of sainthood, take any such

strait-laced position"—then there is surely abundant reason on this account alone, it seems to us, why the change demanded should be refused and the attitude of the Methodist Episcopal Church on these matters be in no way altered. But this reason by no means stands alone. If we should do the thing now asked of us, and excise from the Discipline the prohibition of dancing and such amusements, consistency would speedily demand that we do another thing; namely, modify our declaration in regard to intoxicating liquors. Precisely the same arguments apply to this as to the other matters. If "the kingdom of God does not consist in going to the theater, or not going," as we are told, then surely it does not consist in what we eat or drink. If it is an unwarranted invasion of personal liberty, "a fussy moral interference," to say to our members that they shall not have a social game of whist, or dance at a neighborly gathering, it is equally unwarranted and fussy for us to say, "You shall not take a social glass of wine; you shall not have beer on your table." Certainly these are mere "social customs," quite as much so as the other things, and "indiscrimi-

nate denunciation" of them is quite as much an offense against "good taste" and "good sense." There is no more "agreement in the judgment of Christendom" as to the need of total abstinence from wine than as to the need of total abstinence from theaters; nor can legislation in the one case any more than in the other be regarded as "legislation concerning the fundamental moralities which are recognized everywhere and always." As a rule, the same class who defend their right to see "a decent play" when they wish, also defend their right to take a glass of champagne or sherry when it suits their appetite or convenience. The condemnation of the one is quite as Puritanical and strait-laced, quite as "mechanical and pseudo-spiritual," as the condemnation of the other. Not a single argument holds in one case which does not hold in both cases. Our legislation concerning wine has been fully as unconstitutional as that concerning the theater; has involved quite as distinctly a change in the General Rules of the United Societies. Those rules relate simply to "spirituous" liquors, by which are manifestly meant what are known as ardent spirits, such as rum, gin,

brandy, the products of distillation. The word was never intended to cover either vinous or malt liquors, as is perfectly plain both from the recognized meaning of the term used and from the customs of the time when the rule was framed. Wines and beers were then taken freely, without question, in England and America, by the best of people; indeed, they are taken to-day by a considerable proportion of the Wesleyan Methodist ministers of the old country, which conclusively shows how they understand the rule.

The modern American sentiment that, in 1848, put under ban, by inserting a line in the section on "Imprudent Conduct," the use of all intoxicating liquors as a beverage, did not simply secure greater explicitness, as did the action of 1872; it very seriously changed the substance of the rule in the direction of greater strictness, to correspond with the growing public opinion which demanded it. We believe it was in every sense justified, and will not be repealed, constitution or no constitution. But at the same time we see no chance whatever for it to remain, with any sort of decent consistency, if the legislation against

matters so closely allied with taking intoxicants as are horse-races, circuses, theaters, and such, is to be considered out of order and forever prohibited. For champagne suppers, wine at public dinners, and beer as a tonic are rightly condemned by an overwhelming and almost universal Methodist conviction, not so much because of any sin in the things themselves as because of the portentous evils that spring from their abuse and the impossibility of drawing any defensible line or properly guarding one's example in the matter. Even so, on the same grounds, must we condemn theaters, dancing, and games of chance. The ruin that floods the land from licentiousness and gambling, to which these latter things so directly lead, is hardly second to that which flows from drunkenness. And as temperance reforms properly hold the drinking habits of refined society largely accountable in the one case, so with equal fitness we hold the self-indulgent habits of the same society largely accountable in the other case; and we feel the same warrant to enter against them the strongest kind of protest, in the name of the yearning love of the Lord Jesus Christ for the fallen and

the needs of weak, perishing humanity. But we shall, of course, be told that there is no desire or design on the part of any one to lower the standard of the Church in regard either to drink or amusements, or to give the least encouragement to things hitherto forbidden; that it is only a perfectly harmless and entirely innocent question of ecclesiastical policy, a question as to the best and most practicable method for securing the end aimed at alike by all; that end being the enhancement of true spirituality, the quickening of love to God and man. We are expressly assured that legislation has very little to do with this; that rules for right living must be left wholly to the judgment of the individuals concerned, legislation being altogether out of place in regard to moral conduct, except in the case of fundamental morals. To us it seems exactly otherwise. Fundamental moralities, such as are written on the hearts of all men, are the very ones that least need—in these days, at any rate—ecclesiastical legislation. No one is likely to suppose that the adulterer, the thief, the drunkard, the murderer, can be an acceptable member of the Church; for he is not even

admitted into reputable society. It is precisely in regard to matters which do not shut one out of ordinary society that there is need of clear definition as to what will be considered unbecoming for one who aspires to belong to the more exclusive circle of the Christian Church.

Every organization gives its main attention to matters which are peculiar to itself rather than to those which concern it in common with the rest of the world. If the Church, then, is to have any jurisdiction over the morals of its members—and that would be a very singular Church which did not trouble itself about this, but simply left the whole matter to the unchallenged, undirected discretion or indiscretion of its people, merely telling them to do whatever commended itself to their own individual judgment—it must direct its thought chiefly to those minor moralities wherein its standard is different from the standard of the ungodly world. We see no difficulty in having such legislation both “clear in its principles and successful in its efforts;” sufficiently so, at least, fully to justify it and accord it value. For success in legislation is always a matter of degrees, and

the legislator must often be satisfied with accomplishing only a part of what he intended.

As to the principles that should guide, which we are challenged to produce, some of them at any rate are close at hand and easy to state. One is, that the legislator must keep steadily in view the average mind, the commonly-constituted citizen. In enactments applying to a great community scattered over a wide area, local and personal factors must be eliminated, and the standard must be neither extremely high nor extremely low; not so high that only a few will approve it; not so low as to be really superfluous because universally accepted, and hence without educating power. Under a government, republican or democratic in form, there is little danger of legislation being extremely high, because the law must secure a majority vote before going into effect. And where, as in the case now under consideration, a law has on its side an overwhelming preponderance of votes, it is certainly a fair supposition that the proper medium has been reached and the best interests of the largest number have been conserved. A small minority may always reasonably

be asked to put aside their individual preferences or personal indulgences, and gracefully waive some of their privileges for the general good. If there be even a little hardship in certain circles, or if some sections of the country are put to discomfort or disadvantage, the benefit of the whole body must in all reason be considered as outweighing the special inconvenience or loss felt by the few. And if there ever was a case where this plain principle applied, it is, it seems to us, in this matter of worldly amusements. It may freely be admitted that some do not need the legislation in question, and may even regard it in the light of a "nuisance." But the masses of the people do need it. It has been stated on good authority, which we quite credit, that of the 5,500,000 Methodist members in this country less than 100,000 belong to the classes so called, leaving 5,400,000 who belong to the common people. And we believe it would be both folly and criminality to legislate in the interest of the 100,000 rather than in the interest of the 5,400,000. Such legislation may be called for effect "religious pedagogics" and "fussy moral interference," but the simple fact

is, that the great mass of people, whether in the Church or out of the Church, need some sort of interference, need spiritual education, and have a right to look to the Church to supply it. All law proceeds upon the assumption that people are to a great extent children, children of the State, children of the Church, requiring the voice of authority and the word of instruction, not fully able to be a law unto themselves. This was emphatically the case with the Mosaic law. It was also the principle on which Paul proceeded in his directions to his converts; which directions cover some very minor matters indeed, even prescriptions as to the veiling or unveiling of the head and the speech or silence of women in the Church.

John Wesley, in like manner, made some very minute and specific enactments, embodying, even in the much-praised General Rules, which are supposed to contain his highest wisdom, a sumptuary law about apparel and the wearing of gold; an injunction as to the taking of interest; a command that there be no buying or selling on the Lord's-day, and that family prayer and fasting be observed. Doubtless the great body of those

who were committed to his guidance needed just these ordinances, and he accordingly did right in formulating them. But that neither prevents our changing them at the present time nor our supposing that there were some belonging to his societies then who gave them very scant attention because they did not find them adapted to their condition. No legislator carries his respect for individual conscience and judgment so far that he waits for absolute unanimity before promulgating his law, or refrains from doing a desirable thing because a few good people consider themselves afflicted by it. If this were the case, there would be certainly no liquor laws, no Sabbath laws, no polygamy laws, and our Methodist Discipline itself would be reduced to small dimensions. If people were told simply that they must not do wrong, while the entire question as to what was wrong was left with themselves out of regard to their conscience and liberty, society would take on a very free-and-easy, go-as-you-please aspect, but the result would in the long run be anything but happy. Such a policy, whether adopted by State or Church, would be a cowardly abandon-

ment of duty on the part of the responsible majority charged with the obligations of government. However beautiful and feasible in an ideal state of society, as it may appear to a closet philosopher with his abstract speculations, it would be wholly evil in the world of to-day as we pastors find it around us.

Another principle of legislation having application here is that the law must be general, even sweeping and wholesale, in its form, leaving to the wisdom of the administrator special modifications and adjustments to individual cases. Every judge is given a certain amount of discretion in the application of the statute. Even a common policeman is expected to use some common sense in the interpretation and enforcement of the law. The enactment is made for ordinary circumstances, and where there are manifestly exceptional conditions, he who is charged with the duties of administration is expected to have wisdom enough to know it. It is hardly possible for society to go forward on any other basis. The law in its letter can not take cognizance of all conceivable distinctions. In a statute made for

the entire country or a great Church it can not provide, for example, that dancing is permissible on a carpet, but not on a waxed floor; permissible before twelve o'clock at night, but not after that hour; permissible in the square, but not the round exercise; or permissible with relatives and intimate friends, but not with strangers. It is enough to say simply that dancing, by which is manifestly meant the dance of modern society as it is everywhere commonly practiced, with its physical allurements, its unseemly personal contact, its improper freedoms, together with the style of dress it encourages, the late hours it promotes, and the dissipation to which it so frequently leads; dancing in general; not dancing divested of all that gives it its universal character, its peculiar aroma and relish; not dancing arrayed in abstract and infantile simplicity such as a metaphysician might endow it with, but dancing as it is; that form of dancing to which the common people will resort if they resort to any,—this is declared to be imprudent conduct, of misleading moral tendency. The same is said of attendance at the theater; not some ideal or extremely exceptional theater, but

the theater as we see it every day portrayed on the bill-boards; the theater in its totality; the theater which has been put under ban by the highest councils of most branches of the Christian Church and the foremost philosophic moralists of every age; the theater whose whole trend is hostile to heart purity, whose adjuncts are evil, whose frequenters are mostly unclean, whose performers, according to the universal testimony of those best qualified to know, are almost all of low character; the theater which is the polluter of public taste, the enemy of domestic happiness, the corrupter of youth, and responsible for the destruction of millions. Is it too much to call the patronage of such an institution imprudent and unchristian? We say not. We can not conceive of a Christian Church that is true to its Master saying anything less. We hold that this is precisely the proper thing to say; that it is said in the proper place and in the proper way. For to strike the average mind strongly, the law must be free from equivocation, and circumlocution, and ambiguity. It must not be so artfully framed as to admit of manifold interpretations and easy evasions by

those who are disposed to see in it nothing contrary to their own wishes or practices. It must not be hidden away in some inconspicuous corner, among a variety of discarded regulations constructed one hundred and fifty years ago. If it be of any special importance, it must be writ large, and made so plain on tables that he may run that readeth it. This is what our Church fathers almost a generation since had the wisdom and courage to do. And those who have come after them so far have had the wisdom and courage to ratify their conclusions in the most emphatic manner. With those who claim that these matters of sinful amusement are of no special importance, that they "sink out of sight in comparison with the real issues of life," we totally disagree. When one thinks of the vast numbers lured into ruin through gambling, who take their first lessons in the art from an innocent-looking game of cards; the vast numbers of the unchaste, whose passions were fatally aroused as they permitted themselves unsuspectingly to be whirled about in the dance; the similar numbers who have found in the theater a fascination they could not resist and a most

unhealthy stimulus to the grosser part of their natures, to say nothing of the still larger numbers that have found in the beer mug and the wine cup the exciter of an appetite that has carried them to temporal and eternal destruction,—when one reflects even a little on these things, and remembers also the utterly deadening influence of this kind of indulgence on religious faith and love, and on actual work for the salvation of the unconverted, it seems to us a most amazing and inexplicable thing to count them matters of no consequence.

We believe them to be of so much consequence, having such close relations with the welfare of the young and the safety of the tempted, that to call the ordinances aimed at them “petty prohibitions” is little less than an outrage, and that any one professing supreme love to Jesus Christ who refuses to deny himself at these points for the sake of those weaker is utterly inconsistent, and in no way resembles either the Master or His great apostle, St. Paul. Still further, we announce as a working principle of legislation that whenever public opinion in a State, or the collective consciousness and godly judgment in a Church, has

reached a fairly clear conclusion as to the wrong of certain practices, it is wholly proper and every way advisable to crystallize this sentiment and embody it in a law. Such law registers the high-water mark reached, and greatly helps to establish at this mark that general persuasion which is more or less subject to transient ebbs and flows. It is a ratchet to keep the wheel from slipping back. It is a mighty educative power for the young minds that are constantly coming on. It says to them, "Here is the wisdom of your fathers." And although in the first flush of their untutored impulses they may rebel against it and be disposed to despise it, out of mere decency they are held by it in some restraint until, that wild period having passed, they learn to accept it at its true worth, and in their turn pass it on. If everything is left to fluctuating public opinion, not "hardened into statute;" if there is no effort to crystallize the matter into some concrete form, a great deal will necessarily be lost. Creeds are good, laws are good. Let them be changed occasionally to keep pace with growing intelligence and wholesale moral

progress; but let them, on no account, be wholly swept away under the specious plea that it is better to leave matters of morals to the pliancy and vitality of an ever-shifting popular sentiment.

The limitations of time and space forbid further enlargement on these attractive and instructive principles of legislation. It only remains, as briefly as possible, to touch on some concluding reflections. We believe that our standard of Church membership and of morals is the right one; that these sinful amusements and evil indulgences are detrimental to the religious life, even when taken in moderation and with care; that total abstinence is the only safe rule; and that the banner now borne aloft, on which is inscribed, "No theater-goers, dancers, card-players, or tipplers wanted in the Methodist Episcopal Church," should not be taken down.

While a few do these things now with impunity, it is universally understood that they do them at their own risk, in the face of the most positive and explicit prohibition on the part of the Church. The proposition is to take away this ex-

plicit prohibition; in other words, to legalize all these things, for that will be the precise effect of it. The Church will be understood then as giving no specific deliverance on the matter; it will be regarded as a perfectly open question, concerning which each person will have full permission to do just as he pleases. It is frankly admitted by most that the purpose of the change sought is to free from embarrassment those of our members who like such things, it being supposed that thus we will gain higher standing in the social world. To us nothing seems more suicidal. We believe it to be as true of these amusements as of the liquor traffic,—that they can not be legalized without sin. We hold that, by the proposed change, these things will be practically established among us under what will amount to a most insidious form of license. That only such diversions will be permitted as can be taken “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is a preventive about on a level with that other prescription in the civil law that only “persons of good moral character” are to be liquor-sellers. Each phrase is equally elastic and indefi-

nite, a formula without value, having no recognized significance. It is a simple historical fact that there is scarce any abomination under the sun which has not been practiced in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by those who claimed a good moral character. Our Savior warned His disciples that those who killed them would think they were doing God a service ; but this did not make that killing right. No more does calling the name of Jesus over the dance or the theater make these diversions proper. The fact that people can go to these places, and consider that they take Jesus along with them, only seems to us to show that they are not very well acquainted with Jesus, and that their ideas as to what He would do if He were now here in their place are extremely crude, not finding confirmation in the portrait drawn of Him by the four evangelists or by His trusted apostles. He whose motto was self-denial, not self-indulgence ; the good of the weak, not the gratification of the strong,—is wholly misrepresented by tipplers and card-players.

The plea that the law is not enforced does not

seem to us worthy of the weight placed upon it. If all the regulations which are not everywhere adequately enforced were removed from our statute-books in Church and State, there would be an immense clearing up. The violation of a law is not always sufficient ground for its repeal. The true question to be considered is, Would the end which the law is intended to effect be better secured by its repeal or its retention? We hold that the latter is plainly the case in the present matter. The statute serves its purpose fairly well. Its voice is heeded in the vast majority of instances. It has a mighty educative and deterrent influence. That it is keenly felt as a restraint is perfectly clear from the vigorous efforts made to get it out of the way. The law acts as a powerful check on the impulses of the young; acts as no mere chapter of mild advice could possibly do. Multitudes are led to think and to say: "It is incumbent on me, as a loyal Methodist who respects his Church, to have nothing to do with these things; though I do not quite see myself any harm in them, I will bow to the presumably greater wis-

dom of my superiors, and refrain." Thousands, we believe, by this potent voice of warning, are saved from courses of dissipation.

The constitutionality of the paragraph under examination is questioned, and it is claimed by some that the conditions of Church membership have been altered. To which we have only to say that, if this be so, there has been a great number of other violations of the constitution which need looking after quite as much as this, but which there seems to be no special excitement about.

The form prescribed in 1864 for receiving members into the Church, which includes a promise of benevolent contributions, would seem to come into this category; also the law making willful neglect of class-meetings and prayer-meetings a sufficient ground of expulsion; and the demand for total abstinence from vinous and malt as well as spirituous liquors. These, and many other things, have materially changed the conditions of Church membership much more, in our opinion, than the law about amusements, which in reality only explains what these diversions are

which the General Rule meant to forbid, giving it a more precise, definite form, so that now it has a pinch to it instead of being a vague and meaningless affair. If this plea of unconstitutionality be urged in this matter where it simply makes an opening for greater moral laxity, the demand will certainly be pressed by some of us that the same principle be carried impartially through all our legislation, and our Discipline be radically reconstructed.

The claim sometimes put forward that there must be a complete enumeration of objectionable amusements, or else none should be mentioned, is hardly worthy of serious answer. Those which are mentioned are the most dangerous, are those which stand out in modern life as the great, distinctive, popular, everywhere-practiced pleasures of the world, the chosen vestments which the world-spirit of to-day habitually dons, and which are recognized as such.

These things have a representative character. The Church is universally expected to make some announcement concerning them. When it has

done so, other minor matters will readily adjust themselves; for the same principles which have ruled out these will, it will be seen by any honest, fair-minded person, rule out many other things of the same sort which need not be specified. The Ten Commandments do not furnish a complete list of even prominent sins, but they are not, therefore, of no value.

To the cry, "Let us become like other Churches; let us avoid the unpopularity in some quarters which our peculiar stand occasions," we reply, "Nay, let us maintain our leadership in this matter of a stringent separation between the Church and the world, and do our best to bring other Churches up to our line, instead of dropping back to theirs." Very many, at least of the more earnest ministers and members of other Churches, wish they had our position, had the aid of our rule in protecting their young people. Some of these Churches are strengthening their deliverances against these matters; it is no time for us to weaken ours.

We have the assurance of the editor of the

Epworth Herald, who has taken special pains to examine the matter, and has special facilities therefor, that there is no desire on the part of the young people of Methodism for any change in the law. We are confident there is no demand for it on the part of the class-leaders of the Church, on the part of those engaged in maintaining the prayer-meetings, on the part of those who are of value in altar services and in leading sinners to Christ. There is no demand for it on the part of the rank and file of the ministry—those in touch with the needs of the masses; those who see most clearly what the inevitable result of such repeal would be on the average member of our Churches. There is no important demand for it anywhere, as the General Conference has clearly seen and shown again and again. At the close of this nineteenth century there is no danger of too much asceticism, or too large an infusion of Puritanism. It is not a time to give the slightest encouragement to the fearful gambling furor which had so powerfully taken possession of the land, or to any other form of the worldliness which threatens to

overthrow, not "pseudo-spirituality," but true spirituality. The works of the flesh are manifest, and the works of the Spirit. No amount of sophistication, or witty special pleading, or *ad captandum* appeals can permanently confuse the issue.

The heart of the Methodist Church is sound on these matters, and will not consent to any lowering of the standard; any weakening of the dike which keeps back the tides of evil; any jeopardizing of its youthful members. Under the old banner it will march forward with steadily-increasing numbers, and, with what is far better than that, an influence on the country of the most unequivocal sort in favor of "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

[NOTE.—I recently wrote to Dr. Mudge for permission to use the foregoing, and received by return mail the following cordial reply:

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS., October 22, 1903.

REV. HENRY BROWN:

"Dear Brother,—You have my hearty approval as to the republication of my article on the amusement question. My sentiments have not changed. I am still

deeply interested in the matter, and shall be glad to see your pamphlet or book when it is ready. It is evidently a subject that will, for a good while to come, call forth strong feeling and opinion. Cordially yours,
"JAMES MUDGE."

I greatly appreciate the Doctor's kindness. The use of his article here does not in any way affect his ownership, as I have simply borrowed it, and the copyright of the book does not interfere with his right to copy-right his article.

I trust this article may be widely read, as I regard it as the ablest putting of the case against repeal that has yet appeared.—H. B.]

PART FOURTH.
REDISCUSSION.

A WORD AT THE BEGINNING.



It is well known that a considerable number of the prominent officials of the Church are advocating the repeal of Paragraph 248 of our Discipline, or at least that part of it which relates to amusements. At the last General Conference an attempt was made to remove the amusement clause of 248 to the chapter of "Special Advices," and it is boldly asserted by many of the "repealers" that they will carry the day at the next General Conference.

It might be well if this matter could be settled by a peaceful interchange of opinions, but we can hardly hope for such a quiet settlement. It is an important question in the estimation of a very large number of our people, and there must necessarily be discussion, for no great question has ever yet been settled without the clash of arguments in the field of controversy.

We are well aware that some of our great

and good men have advocated repeal in the past, and they will probably continue to do so, and the fact that they hold an unfavorable opinion of the amusement clause may influence very many against the rule as it now stands; but we are convinced that their opinions are not well founded, and in the following pages we shall attempt to show that the arguments upon which they rely are weak and fallacious.

This may seem like presumption, but it must be remembered that while an "opinion"—a formulated sentiment or conviction—derives its value very largely from the character, standing, and *official position* of the one who originates or advances it, on the contrary an "argument"—the weapon of opinion—must rest upon its merits, and be estimated at its own intrinsic value, entirely apart from any consideration of the one who produces or uses it.

Any discussion of this question, whether for or against repeal, should be conducted on the high plane of Christian courtesy and not on the low level of vituperative partisanship; but at the same time we must remember that fidelity to con-

viction frequently compels us to say and do severe and painful things.

Believing in the importance and necessity of the retention of the amusement clause in its present place, in Paragraph 248, and in the judicial department of the Discipline, we now propose, briefly and modestly, but without fear or favor, to re-examine and refute the principal arguments advanced by the advocates of repeal.

CHAPTER I.

THAT ALLEGED "BLUNDER" OF 1872.

It is loudly asserted by very many who favor the repeal of the amusement clause in Paragraph 248 in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that the General Conference of 1872 did a very unwise thing when it inserted that clause in the penal code, in the "Judicial" department of the Discipline.

Dr. Mains, in his *Review* article, says:

"I believe that the section in our Discipline, inserted by the General Conference of 1872, presenting to the Church an authoritative *index expurgatorius* of amusements, was a most grave blunder of ecclesiastical legislation. I believe that the effect of this distinctive enactment, and that almost without compensating feature, has been to damage and belittle the influence of our denomination."

This candid statement of opinion, like everything else the Doctor says, is worthy of respectful consideration. But perhaps there is another side to this question. Let us see.

Who will undertake to deny that the amusements enumerated in Paragraph 248 "are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency?" Will Dr. Mains? I think not, for he says, "I write with no purpose to defend, and have no sympathy with, that which is questionable or wrong in practice." It is true that he does not say that the particular amusements specified are "questionable or wrong in practice," but he leaves us to infer as much; for he further declares that he is not personally addicted to any of the customs prohibited in the paragraph under consideration.

It may be well at this point to note the fact, however, that a few of the advocates of repeal are not willing to concede that the amusements prohibited in Paragraph 248 are harmful.

Dr. Borden P. Bowne, in an article published in the *Methodist Review*, May-June, 1898, says:

"What is needed is, not legislation and wholesale condemnation, but the cultivation of thoughtfulness, discrimination, broadmindedness, a sense of responsibility and of the many-sidedness of life. With such instruction Christians might be trusted to seek amusements without official guidance, and if, upon occasion, they should see a clean play, or have a social game of

cards, or engage in a dance in reputable society, no harm would be done."

It is sufficient reply to the above to say that if every member of the Church was as scholarly, as well poised mentally and morally, as Dr. Bowne, and if the theater was always clean, and card-playing and dancing never occurred anywhere but in reputable society, then all would be safe, and legislation would be unnecessary on this matter. But the membership of the Church is composed of all classes and conditions, young and old, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, strong and weak, and the life of very many is a constant battle with temptation. Repeal the amusement clause, remove all restraint; take down the danger signal, and Dr. Bowne and others as strong and mature as he would be perfectly safe; but what of our children, what of the weak and immature as they observe the Doctor and his friends indulging in card-playing, dancing, and theater-going? When the Doctor talks about a "clean play," and a "social game of cards" or a "dance" which he and his friends can engage in without harm, he

evidently forgets or totally ignores two very important facts:

First. The theater, the dance, and cards are established institutions, with a reputation for evil that is universal.

John Wesley in his day denounced the theater as "the sink of all profaneness and debauchery;" and a modern actress in speaking of stage life says, "It is hell,—downright hell."

Sam Jones defines dancing as "hugging set to music;" Gail Hamilton says "the thing is unclean and can not be washed;" and Dr. Howard Crosby once said that "three-fourths of the abandoned girls of New York were ruined by dancing."

Bishop Lawrence, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in speaking of card-playing says: "Two generations ago playing cards was prohibited. Then the cards were brought forth from their hiding-places and given a place in the innocent amusement of the home. To-day they are returning to their old calling as the instrument of gambling." And Henry Ward Beecher, in his lecture to young men on this question of amuse-

ments, speaks of the downward tendency, and declares that "Hell is populated with the victims of 'harmless' amusements."

Second. In view of the influence exerted upon those about us by our personal conduct, self-denial becomes a necessary Christian virtue, and the practice of that virtue is just as necessary in the matter of amusements as in the matter of drinking or selling intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

Dr. Bowne may, without harm to himself, go to the theater to see a "clean play;" but he has no right to do so if, by so doing, he influences others to go to see a "play" that is not clean.

The prohibition of the theater and other kindred amusements does not lie against the "clean," but the "unclean." And these amusements, considered as institutions, are unclean.

But I am reminded that Dr. Bowne says, "This argument from 'the institution' is simply a verbal fallacy," etc. We can not linger here to argue the question with the learned professor, but will turn him over to Dr. Buckley, who says:

"The theater is not to be judged as though repre-

sentations were isolated things, like books. It is an *institution*. . . . The theater is an institution with a very pronounced character."

Yes, and so are the other amusements that are prohibited in Paragraph 248 *institutions*, and they are also "institutions of a very pronounced character."

Now, if we concede that the amusements enumerated in Paragraph 248 are institutions of evil, that as they exist to-day they are a menace to morality and spirituality, why should the action of the General Conference of 1872 in the enactment of the prohibitory clause be characterized as "a most grave blunder of ecclesiastical legislation?" And why should we conclude that the effect of this prohibitive legislation has been to "damage and belittle the influence of our denomination?"

If the theater is an evil institution—the theater as it is, and not the theater as some dreamer thinks it might be, if it is, as a prominent divine has said, "a gilded nastiness;" if it is degrading in its influence, hurtful to society, and an enemy to the Church of Christ, why should not the Meth-

odist Church plainly declare the fact? If it was right for the Church at an earlier date to enact laws against human slavery—and drunkenness, and plainly to specify these evils by name, why was it wrong to enact a law against certain other evils by specific enactment in 1872?

These are some of the questions that have to be met by Dr. Mains, and Dr. Buckley, and Dr. Bowne, and other advocates of repeal, who contend that it was a piece of unwisdom to insert the amusement clause in the penal code, and that the General Conference of 1872 blundered in doing so.

And these questions they have honestly tried to answer; and if their answers are not convincing to us, it is probably because it is another instance of strong men trying to win on a weak case, or else we are afflicted in the manner indicated in Dr. Borden P. Bowne's diagnosis, and are suffering with "asceticism," "fanaticism," "Pharisaism," "a narrow and sophisticated type of piety," "religious pettiness," "ecclesiastical fussiness and pseudo-spirituality;" and, in addition, "a little dull," and "not thoroughly sane!"

But, seriously now, is all of the "intelligence," "discrimination," "honesty," "thoughtfulness," and "broadmindedness" of the Church to be found in the camp of the repealers?

We may be laboring under a delusion, but some of us think that the action of the General Conference of 1872 in placing the amusement clause in the penal code was eminently wise and right.

I. There never had been any doubt among the fathers in the early days of Methodism as to the evil character of the amusements now specified in Paragraph 248. All Methodism considered them as included under the General Rule which prohibits "the taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus."

So long as the Methodists were poor and obscure and pious, so long as they felt that the mission of Methodism was to spread "Scriptural holiness" through the land, there was very little trouble on the amusement question. But when the Church had become great, and rich, and influential, and popular; when many of the rich and

fashionable members of society entered its ranks; when the atmosphere of polite society invaded the sacred precincts of the sanctuary,—then the theater-going, card-playing, dancing Methodist was not the rarity he had been.

2. It was noticed that the example of the aforesaid theater-going, card-playing, dancing Methodist was infectious, and the pestilence was rapidly spreading in the cities, and the spirituality that had formerly been a distinguishing characteristic of Methodism seemed on the decline. These evidences of spiritual retrogression were viewed with alarm by many of the foremost men of the Church. But what could be done to check the evil?

“Why did not they preach against it?” They did. The pulpits blazed and thundered here and there along the line; but there were those in the larger cities that blazed very little and thundered not at all, in deference to the delicate nerves of those who were so “intelligent,” and “discriminating,” and “broadminded,” that they could and did go occasionally to see a “clean play,” and now and then danced or played cards in “reputable

society," and without any apparent harm to their type of piety.

"Why didn't they bring them to trial under the General Rule, after they had been unavailingly labored with, and expel them for taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus?" Ah, well, that brings us to something else.

3. At this stage it was found that the General Rule was entirely too "general" to meet the requirements of the situation. So long as the great body of the Church was unanimous in the condemnation of the theater or the dance, there was no difficulty in the enforcement of the rule; but when the tide turned in the richer and more powerful sections of Methodism, it was discovered that *it could not be enforced!* Why? For the very simple reason that the offender could say to his pastor or administrator of discipline: "The General Rule does not specify any particular amusement, but leaves every member of the Church free to decide this matter for himself. Were I a Roman Catholic and you my priest, then, in the absence of any rule specific or gen-

eral, you might command me to abstain for forty days during Lent, or for any period of time, and I would be compelled to obey, under the impression that if I acted contrary to your wishes or commands you could make it 'hot' for me in Purgatory. But the Methodist Episcopal Church is a Protestant organization, and in the absence of any specific rule against the theater or the dance I have just as much right to indulge in them as you have to abstain from them, so long as my conscience does not condemn me. If your conscience will not allow you to attend the theater, you ought to stay away; but you have no right, in the absence of any specific statute prohibiting the theater, to interfere with my indulgence by making your conscience the rule of my conduct."

The General Conference of 1872 squarely met the issue by putting its official interpretation of the General Rule on amusements into the penal code in the form of a specific prohibitive statute, thus making the General Rule operative; and in doing so the General Conference acted wisely and well. But it was a hard blow to the pleasure-loving, worldly-minded Methodist.

CHAPTER II.

AMUSEMENT NECESSARY.

EVERYBODY admits the necessity for amusement. On this point there is no ground for controversy. And yet the advocates of repeal, driven to desperation for lack of material out of which to construct a better argument, constantly assert that the amusement clause in Paragraph 248 amounts to a wholesale condemnation and prohibition of amusements. Dr. Borden P. Bowne says on this point:

“The Church needs to remove its ban from the world of amusements for the sake of all concerned. Wholesale and indiscriminating condemnation brings the Church into contempt, and deprives its just criticism of any weight.”

The expression “world of amusements” is all-inclusive, and we are forced to conclude that, in the opinion of Dr. Bowne, all amusements must stand or fall with those enumerated in Paragraph 248.

As he views the matter, the enactment of the amusement clause placed the ban of the Church on the "world of amusements," the good as well as the bad, and so he would remedy the matter by repealing that clause, and thus take the ban off the "world of amusements," from the bad as well as the good! To his philosophic mind the condemnation of the amusements specified in 248 is nothing short of a "wholesale and indiscriminating condemnation" of amusements which "brings the Church into contempt!"

Some of us, however, who can only lay claim to a limited amount of wisdom, and who probably have a very imperfect knowledge of language and of logic, have been utterly unable to reach any such conclusion. We have all along entertained the opinion that Dr. Channing was right when, in a public address delivered in Boston in the year 1837, he roundly denounced the theater; and we are of the opinion that he was also right when he recommended "recitation" in the place of the stage, saying that "Shakespeare, worthily recited, would be better understood than on the stage."

We have labored under the opinion—possibly Dr. Bowne would say, delusion—that there are many ways by which we could obtain legitimate and wholesome amusement without resorting to those forms which “are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency!” If we ever change our mind, and the opportunity presents, and the repealers carry the day, and the amusement clause is scattered to the four winds, we may be persuaded to accompany Dr. Bowne when he goes to see that angelic thing which he calls “a clean play!” In the meantime we shall endeavor to content ourselves with what little enjoyment we can find outside the theater, and away from the dance-hall and the card-party.

For the sake of our friends in and around Boston it is to be hoped that somebody will discover or devise some amusement that will afford them relief and enable them to forget the sweet delights of the theater and the ballroom for a time.

Dr. Mains also lifts up his voice at this juncture, and, after speaking learnedly and well about “the desire for amusement,” and “the faculty of

amusement," and the divinely-implanted "instinct of amusement," and after quoting Bishop Foss, goes on to say:

"But the Church will take right and defensible grounds when it cheerfully recognizes that God may be just as certainly glorified in the legitimate use of the amusement faculty as in the use of any other faculty which he has given to man."

Now, in all this we heartily agree with the Doctor; but what has this to do with the question under discussion? Does he wish us to understand that it is his deliberate opinion that the amusement clause in Paragraph 248 is a bar to "the legitimate use of the amusement faculty?" Does he mean to assert that Methodists can not—I speak seriously—can not glorify God fully so long as Paragraph 248 stands unrepealed? Does he mean to say that, without the amusements there prohibited, the life of a Methodist is a dreary, doleful march from the cradle to the tomb? He says of himself, "I have never been a dancer, never a theater-goer, never a card-player."

So we learn that, either by preference or in obedience to the law, the Doctor has never en-

joyed the pleasures of the theater, the dance, or the card-table; but are we therefore compelled to conclude that, in his steady march along the rugged pathway of the itinerancy up to the exalted position he now occupies, through all these years from 1872 up to the present date, his life has been a weary, wailing woe? And that he has never had any fun?

CHAPTER III.

PROHIBITION OF SINFUL AMUSEMENTS "UNSCRIPTURAL."

IF Moses had been present in the Chicago Auditorium when this question was under discussion at the last General Conference, he would doubtless have appreciated the following interesting bit of information from Dr. Raymond:

"The next thought I want to suggest is, that it seems to me to be entirely unscriptural. Something has been said with regard to the Scriptural argument on this question. There is nothing in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ that is of this character. Indeed, if you go back to the Old Testament Scriptures, you will find there plenty of regulations laid out for Israel, but that was in Israel's undeveloped condition. Ceremonialism and Pharisaism are the conditions you find there; but as you begin to move forward toward the New Testament, there is a continued taking off of law and regulation."

This also, from Dr. Bashford, would have stirred the old prophet profoundly:

"It is a question between the law and the gospel. The very argument you use to prove that you ought

to maintain the penal code, that very argument could have been used against Jesus for abolishing the law by the gospel!"

I imagine I can see the grand old lawgiver slowly rise to his feet and majestically move toward the nearest exit, muttering in an undertone: "I must depart. This is no place for me. I can not sit in silence when I hear such sentiments from the lips of one of the great teachers of this modern Israel, and the distinguished rabbi who preceded him. If my Lord and Master ever repealed or abolished the law, it is very singular that he has left me in ignorance of that fact till this day. I know that the laws that were peculiar to the people of Israel as a nation have long since passed away, and the laws that made up the ceremonialism of the Old Testament dispensation have been superseded by the better things of the glorious dispensation of our blessed Redeemer, but I never knew till to-day that Jesus Christ had abolished *the* law; and if he did, if the Decalogue has been abrogated, then this world is not a safe spot for me, and I will return to my place."

I have understood that Dr. Bashford believes in the prohibition of the liquor-traffic, and I have always supposed that he was in sympathy with that part of Paragraph 248 which prohibits the "use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage;" but I must have been mistaken; for if it is "unscriptural" to forbid indulgence in sinful amusement, it is equally unscriptural to prohibit the use of intoxicating beverages. If it is said that the liquor curse is a mighty evil, and the magnitude of the evil justifies extreme measures, we reply that, while it is true that the saloon is the devil's slaughter-pen for young men, it is none the less true that these sinful amusements that are enumerated in Paragraph 248 are his death-traps for young women!

Drunkenness from the use of intoxicating liquor is bad—very bad; but moral intoxication from the use of lust-provoking amusements is a thousand times worse.

When it is unscriptural for the Church to denounce and prohibit that which leads to drunkenness among its members, then, and not till

then, will it be unscriptural to denounce and prohibit that which leads to licentiousness.

Jesus Christ did not abolish the Ten Commandments—the moral law. He himself declares that He came “to fulfill” and “not to destroy.” To argue that because the gospel has come, there is no longer any place for law, is totally to disregard the stubborn fact that this world has not yet been won over to righteousness, and that, until it is, there must be discipline in the militant host if we would hope for final victory.

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CHAPTER IV.

SAYS IT IS "UNCONSTITUTIONAL."

EX-GOVERNOR PATTISON, an honored layman, and Chairman of the Committee on the State of the Church at the General Conference of 1900, in urging the adoption of the majority report, recommending the removal of the amusement clause, said :

"The Judiciary Committee four years ago reported these provisions, as enumerated, as unconstitutional, and if unconstitutional they should therefore be removed from the constitutional part of the Church rules and orders."

If the amusement clause is unconstitutional, then, either the said clause should be removed from the judicial department of our Book of Discipline, or the constitution should be amended.

But upon what ground did the Committee on Judiciary in the General Conference of 1896 declare the amusement clause unconstitutional?

The following from their report—No. 3—is found in the *Daily Advocate*, May 23, 1896:

"We are of the opinion that Paragraph 240 of the Discipline was an act of legislation by the General Conference of 1872, and not a judicial construction of the General Rules upon the subjects contained in said section; that the clause therein relating to specific amusements changes Section 30 of the General Rules by adding thereto the amusements enumerated in said Paragraph 240, and is therefore in violation of Section 4, Paragraph 67, of the Discipline, which declares that 'The General Conference shall not revoke nor change the general Rules of the United Societies.'"

Observe that Paragraph 240, above referred to, is now 248. The number of the paragraph was changed by that General Conference, the insertion of other paragraphs making the change necessary; but it is a significant fact that the paragraph itself was not changed, and the amusement clause was not removed!

This is accounted for very easily as, in the first place, this report, though published in the *Advocate* as all reports must be, never reached the floor, and was never acted upon; and in the second place, it is extremely doubtful, if it would have been adopted had it been presented.

In the foregoing report, the Committee gives its opinion. It declares that Paragraph 240—now 248—of the Discipline, “was an act of legislation,” and “not a judicial construction.” It declares that the insertion of the amusement clause “changes” the General Rule which prohibits “the taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus,” by “adding thereto the amusements enumerated” in the paragraph.

Now let us carefully look into this opinion and see if it possesses any real value.

The General Rule forbids “diversions that can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.” What must be the general character of the “diversions” thus referred to? We are persuaded that even this Committee on Judiciary would acknowledge that they are evidently sinful, either in their essential constitution or in their tendency. Now, what kind of amusements are enumerated in Paragraph 248? Whatever the Committee may have thought, we know that the vast majority of our people, including many of our most prominent “repealers,” think that they

stand at the head of the list of popular sinful amusements. The General Rule does not specify a single amusement by name! If it did, there would be some little ground for the opinion that the "addition" of other amusements in a list elsewhere would be unconstitutional. But it plainly indicates the *character* of the proscribed "diversions," and that character exactly fits the amusements enumerated in Paragraph 248! In other words, they are covered by the General Rule, and are therefore not unconstitutional.

How this Committee on Judiciary got the idea that the insertion of the amusement clause was "not a judicial construction," but a special act of legislation "adding" to the General Rule the amusements enumerated in the penal code, is something of a mystery to some of us. Did not Dr. Curry and his honored associates know fully as well as this Committee on Judiciary that it would be unconstitutional to *add* anything to the General Rules? Will any one charge them with intentionally doing an unconstitutional act? If we concede that they were possessed of average intelligence and honesty, then we are com-

pelled to admit that their act was one of "construction," and not of "addition" to the General Rule.

They simply took from under the cover of the General Rule, certain well-known popular amusements, exposed them to the gaze of the public, and practically said: "These are the things that are forbidden in the General Rule—these, and others like them. They are such diversions as Methodists can not 'use in the name of the Lord Jesus,' and whoever among us indulges in these sinful and forbidden amusements is guilty of 'imprudent and unchristian conduct,' and shall be dealt with accordingly."

This theory is supported further by the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Church of Canada, have both put themselves on record as regarding the very amusements enumerated in Paragraph 248 as coming under the prohibition of the General Rule when properly interpreted.

(Turn to Part Second—Legislation—and see what is said.)

Ex-Governor Pattison, after referring to the

report and the opinion of the committee, evidently does not consider the aforesaid opinion of much weight ; for he says that, even if the amusement clause should be removed from Paragraph 248 and placed bodily—as his report recommended—in the chapter on “Advices,” the pastor would still have the right to “enforce the rule in reference to a prosecution!” Does he mean to say that, when it is unconstitutional to prohibit the theater in the judicial department of the Discipline, it is yet possible, under the constitution, judicially to arraign a member of the Church for theater-going? Well, let the General Conference remove the amusement clause from the penal code on the ground of its unconstitutionality, and then let Ex-Governor Pattison arraign some Methodist for theater-going—if he can!

CHAPTER V.

THE INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE.

THE relation of the individual to the Church and to society at large is a question worthy of the most thoughtful consideration. How far-reaching are the rights of the individual, and what limitations of his personal privileges may the Church or society of which he is a voluntary member rightfully impose?

Dr. Mains declares that:

“A Protestant Church may preach the Word; may reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine; but when, through its councils, it undertakes to legislate authoritatively for the individual conscience, by so much it ceases to be Protestant, and is in spirit Papal.”

Here again the Doctor fires at a man of straw. The Methodist Church, through its supreme legislative body, enacted a law for the government of the *conduct* of its members, when, in 1872, it inserted the amusement clause where we now

find it. It was not the conscience but the conduct of its members that it had in view when it prohibited certain sinful amusements by specific statute.

The individual conscience is left perfectly free by this legislation, and may wander where it will, but the conduct of the individual must conform to the will of the Church as expressed in its laws; for in the Church, as in the State, the will of the individual must be subject to the will of the majority. On this fundamental principle rests the entire fabric of representative human government, and on this same principle rests the entire judicial system of our Church. If the Church has a right to institute judicial proceedings against one of its ministers for heretical preaching, it also has a right to institute judicial proceedings against one of its members for sinful practice. In either case it is not the conscience but the conduct that comes in conflict with the law.

If a Methodist minister, by continued investigation, reaches a point where he finds himself at war with our Methodist standards of doctrine,

so that he can not longer conscientiously preach in harmony with those standards, the right thing and the manly thing for him to do is to get out of the Church; for the world is wide, and God's goodness is great, and the Methodist Episcopal Church has no monopoly of Divine grace. There will be plenty of room for him elsewhere. If, however, his theology is only a little "off color," and his little hobby consists in occasionally mounting a pair of highly-polished and beautifully-decorated scholastic stilts, on which he majestically meanders "rubberingly" through the mists of speculative philosophy, he may remain in the Church so long as he continues to give the people loaves of bread and not chunks of fog. On the non-essentials and in the realm of speculation the Church will give him plenty of latitude; but if he assails the fundamentals, he has no ground of complaint, and he has no right to whine, if the Church opens the door and politely bows him out. In all this the rights of conscience are protected; but it must be remembered that the collective conscience of the Church has rights

to be considered, as well as the single conscience of the individual.

The same reasoning applies to this question of amusements.

Judicial administration concerns itself not with the conscience of the Methodist offender, but with his conduct. The pulpit looks after his conscience. If any Methodist, either in the pulpit or the pew, becomes so "broadminded" that he can conscientiously indorse the dance, the theater, and all other amusements, the Church does not judicially disturb him so long as his conduct is in harmony with her law—so long as he does not indulge in the forbidden amusements. But when his mind broadens to that extent that he becomes so "intelligent," and "discriminating," and "honest," and "brave," and so free from the "pseudo-spiritual," that he feels that he can not glorify God without running counter to the law of the Church,—that he can not conscientiously stay away from the card-table, the theater, and the dance,—then that is the time when he should quietly retire. And if his conscience is of the

right stamp, if it still possesses the elements of decency and consistency, that is the very thing it will prompt him to do. For when he came to the door of the Church seeking admission, he solemnly promised that he would "cheerfully be governed by the rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church," and a conscience that is worth the slightest consideration will urge him to keep that vow, or get out.

CHAPTER VI.

“PROHIBITIVE STATUTES OF CONDUCT.”

BUT Dr. Mains is not content to remain in the realm of conscience. He carries the war into the sphere of human conduct. He boldly declares that:

“It is not the mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church to undertake to save men by fencing them behind doubtful prohibitive statutes of conduct.”

A good deal depends upon the meaning of the word “save” in the above quotation. We, as Methodists, would never think of attempting to save a man spiritually by giving him food and drink; but, by so doing, we might “save” him physically—save him from starvation. So the Methodist Episcopal Church never attempts to save any spiritually by “fencing them behind doubtful prohibitive statutes of conduct,” but it does seek to save them ethically by “prohibitive

statutes of conduct" that are not "doubtful," but helpful. It enacted a law—a "prohibitive statute of conduct"—relative to the use of intoxicating liquor as a beverage, not to save them for heaven, but to save them from hell—the drunkard's hell. It is assumed that members of the Methodist Episcopal Church have already been "saved" in the spiritual sense by the gospel. In this sense the law saves nobody. But now, if the Church may enact a "prohibitive statute of conduct" with reference to intoxicants, on what principle can we forbid her the right to enact a "prohibitive statute of conduct" with reference to sinful amusements? It does not avail to say that there is a difference of opinion concerning the character of the amusements that are enumerated in Paragraph 248, and that some very excellent Christians indulge in those amusements, for it is equally true that there is a difference of opinion concerning the use of the liquors prohibited in this same paragraph, and some very excellent Christians indulge in the drink.

Any argument that proves that it is unwise, or wrong, for the Church to enact a law prohibit-

ing the dance, proves just as conclusively that it is unwise, or wrong, for it to enact a law prohibiting the wine-cup.

If Dr. Mains would repeal the amusement clause in Paragraph 248, then consistency would compel him to repeal the liquor clause in the same paragraph. Indeed, to be consistent, he would be compelled to repeal the whole thing. And on what principle does he justify such a course? On the false and pernicious principle of "personal liberty" in the sphere of human conduct.

That doctrine has been paraded so universally by the advocates of the liquor-traffic that everybody is familiar with it, and it has been so often and so thoroughly refuted that it is unnecessary to spend any time on it here.

But possibly the Doctor might contend that the doctrine of "personal liberty" as advocated by the liquorites is objectionable for the reason that it affects the citizenship of the State, which is vastly different from the membership of the Church, in that the citizenship is *complex*, while the membership is *single* in moral character;

that the complex moral character of the "citizenship"—running as it does all the way from the very good down to the very bad—requires different treatment from the single moral character of the "membership" which is—or is supposed to be—all good; that, in other words, "personal liberty" is *wrong* in the State, but *right* in the Church.

Very plausible such reasoning may seem, but it is as perilous as it is plausible.

In the Church, as well as in the State, government is necessary; for not all who come into the Church are "good," and not all who are good at the beginning remain good to the end.

But government implies law, and law is the expression of the will of the body—ecclesiastical as well as civil—and the will of the body is constructed from the collective judgment or conscience of that body, and in both the Church and the State this fundamental principle is vital to the permanency of either; namely, *the will of the individual must be subordinate to the will of the collective body*. So, then, the rights and privileges of the individual must be considered in

their relations to the rights and privileges of every other individual, and of the whole body in its collective capacity.

It is, therefore, the right of the Church, as well as the State, to give definite expression to its convictions, to enact specific statutes, prohibitive or otherwise, for the good of the whole, and to demand that the individual member shall respect its authority and obey its laws.

The doctrine of "personal liberty," as defined in the red lexicon of the liquorites—"Every fellow for himself, and the devil take the hindmost"—would wreck the Church, as it would wreck the State, and the result would be that the devil would not only get the "hindmost," but, in all probability, would bag the whole procession.

This doctrine of "personal liberty" means anarchy and ruin, and the sooner it is sent to the limbo of condemned and discarded theories the better.

If, therefore, the Church, in its collective capacity, conscientiously thinks that it ought to enact a prohibitory law, forbidding the use of intoxicating liquors, or indulgence in such amuse-

ments "as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency," its right to do so in a constitutional way is as clear as a sunbeam, and will only be disputed by a crank or an anarchist. And when the Methodist Episcopal Church, through its supreme legislative body, enacts such a law, it is the veriest nonsense to say that in so doing she "ceases to be Protestant, and is in spirit Papal."

Roman Catholicism rules by the arbitrary decree of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, while the Methodist Episcopal Church rules by the deliberate and considerate enactments of a delegated legislative body in which the laity is represented equally with the clergy; *and it is peculiarly significant that "the amusement clause" was inserted in the penal code by the very first General Conference in which the laity had representation.*

CHAPTER VII.

“NURSERY RULES.”

It is reported that a prominent leader among the “repealers” was recently heard to declare that the Methodist Episcopal Church is no longer in its infancy, and therefore it is unwise to attempt to govern its membership as you would govern a lot of babies!

And Dr. Mains, after indicating what he considers as the distinguishing characteristics and principles of Protestantism, says:

“Manifestly it would be an inconsistency for a Church that concedes these fundamental principles to undertake to govern by a set of nursery rules all of its people, irrespective of their conditions of age, inheritance, environment, or education.”

Now, there is no getting around the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church is no longer in its infancy. It will soon be one hundred and twenty years old.

But it is noticeable that the membership of the Church to-day does not include any that were present at its organization in 1784.

The Church is an institution. Its members are human beings.

The Church lives on. Its members die.

Yes; we will readily concede that the Church is old, and wise, and strong. But even the protagonists in the ranks of the "repealers" must admit that much of the present membership is young, and inexperienced, and weak. And so some of us have an idea that because the Church—the institution—is old, and wise, and strong, it is therefore her duty to care for the young, the inexperienced, and the weak, among her members, and to use, not only the voice of persuasion, but that of command when necessary.

See the great army of children bearing the banners of our Sunday-schools. They are not yet old enough, nor wise enough, nor strong enough successfully to battle with the temptations that constantly beset them. They need the strong, tender, guiding and controlling hand of

the Church. When you are in a home where there are children, better be careful how you make sneering remarks about "nursery rules."

See the mighty host of Epworth Leaguers, with their cross, and their motto, and their enthusiasm. They are bright and wise for their years, but they realize full well that they need the wisdom of older heads, the combined wisdom of the Church, and they are willing to have that wisdom put in such form as to be helpful to them, and placed, not in some remote corner of our ecclesiastical closet of odds and ends, known as a chapter of "Advices," but on the throne of authority, where its voice will be heard and its mandates heeded.

See, also, that other army of rescued men and women who have escaped from the bondage of sin, and desire to reach the promised land, but who find themselves frequently longing for the luxuries of Egypt—the old habits still alive, the old appetites not yet dead,—what can the Church do for them? She may and she must, if she keeps faith with God, instruct, persuade, encour-

age, exhort, and reprove "with all longsuffering and doctrine," but she must also do it "with all authority."

To these the law is a safeguard, a danger signal, a rule of conduct, and by it many are saved who, without it, would be lost.

The pitiful plea for the removal of the amusement clause on the ground that young people are naturally willful and disposed to rebel against authority, and that the law by its very presence cultivates duplicity—for some will disregard it anyway—is about as reasonable as to say that the Decalogue cultivates duplicity because some people habitually disregard it, and that therefore it ought to be repealed.

But if, as Dr. Mains says, the Church ought not to undertake to govern by a set of "nursery rules" all of its people "irrespective of their conditions of age, inheritance, environment, or education," what course would he recommend for the protection of the young, the inexperienced, and the weak, and also for the protection of the Church itself in the face of possible persistent

dangerous insubordination? Would he have the Church follow the plan adopted by the State with reference to the liquor-traffic? Would he reconstruct the law so as to bar all minors from the drink and the dance, but allowing all members in full connection and good standing to drink and dance at their pleasure? That would be great!

CHAPTER VIII.

"A WINNOWING FAN."

IN his *Review* article, Dr. Mains, after speaking of his failure to secure the membership of "three most excellent young persons," during his Brooklyn pastorate, for the alleged reason that "they could not make themselves believe that for them certain things are wrong which our Discipline formally declares to be such," and after further stating that these same persons found a home in another Church where they were rapidly developing into "the finest types of Christian character and usefulness," proceeds as follows:

"And the thing to be emphasized is that which held these young people in self-exclusion from membership in the Methodist Church was not a thing discreditable to their Christian character, but rather a quality worthy of all commendation. They exercised their own right of thought, and at the same time were too conscientious to place themselves in a false position. Had they been less thoughtful and less conscientious, they might now be in the membership of the Methodist Episcopal

Church. The rule thus operates as a winnowing-fan which winnows out and away from us some of the most valuable material for Church membership."

But has it never occurred to the Doctor that the entire Discipline is somewhat of the nature of a "winnowing-fan," and that because of its many peculiarities of doctrine and polity a vast multitude are "winnowed out and away from us" who are indeed "valuable material for Church membership?" Are they therefore lost to God and to Christianity? By the Doctor's own testimony these three that he refers to are doing very well in another communion.

Is he so inordinately ambitious that he would use up all of the "valuable material for Church membership," and not leave any at all for the Presbyterian, Baptist, or Congregational Churches who differ from us with regard to the "decrees," baptism, and Church government?

Must Methodism fix over its ecclesiastical fanning-mill to suit the peculiar "conscientious" whim of every person who happens to be "wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason?"

But if we compliantly change the Discipline in obedience to the arrogant demands of these people who will not come to us or remain with us unless their personal wills are bowed down to by the whole Church, what assurance have we that we shall get them or keep them even then?

In the General Conference of 1900 was a young man who was the particular pet lion of Eastern Methodism. He was exhibited upon the platform, and in the principal pulpits of Chicago. His name was upon every Methodist tongue. He was pointed out as a possible bishop. Presently it was whispered about that if we wished to keep this great man and others like him in the Methodist Episcopal Church we must remove the "time-limit." We were informed that he was a man of such marvelous and increasing bigness that it would be impossible to keep him longer within the compass of the regulation five-year girdle. The objectionable "time-limit" was accordingly removed, and everybody was happy except a few "old fogies" who were so

dull-witted that they failed to see the wisdom of this action. But had we not thereby saved this great young man to Methodism? Surely! Now let the "old fogies" grin and bear it. But alas! Not many moons had passed when the entire Church was startled by the unexpected announcement that this same young man had left us for—well, it doesn't matter for what he left us, nor where he went. It is sufficient for our purpose to call attention to the fact that, in that particular case, the change in our "fanning-mill" proved a failure at the very point where it was supposed to be a success!

Returning now to the "three most excellent young persons" who refused to enter the Methodist Episcopal Church because of the rule on amusements, we note that the Doctor says, "Had they been less thoughtful and less conscientious they might now be in the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

What an astounding statement for the Doctor to make! For does he not indorse the position of these young persons relative to the rule

in question? Now what is the logic of the situation? Simply this: If the extreme conscientiousness of these "three most excellent young persons" with reference to the "amusement clause" would not permit them to *come into* the Methodist Episcopal Church, then equal conscientiousness on the part of the Doctor ought to cause him to *go out* of the Church. If, according to the Doctor, they are to be commended for staying *out*, then what shall we say of the Doctor for staying *in*?

Had the Doctor taken the trouble to explain to these "three most excellent young persons" the object had in view by those who enacted the rule on amusements; had he labored to show them that, while some might indulge in these prohibited amusements without harm to themselves, yet there were many, very many, to whom these amusements would undoubtedly prove an open door to perdition; had he explained that this rule is in the line of self-denial, and is to be observed by every member of the Church, not simply for his own sake, but for the sake of others;

had he urged, with his customary force, that abstinence from an unnecessary thing, however desirable, for the sake of others who are weak and easily led astray, is the surest way to secure the approval of our Divine Master; had he emphasized the fact that these prohibited amusements have always and everywhere proven fatal to the life and spirituality of the Church when indulged in by the membership; and if, after all this, these "three most excellent young persons" had refused to unite with the Methodist Episcopal Church for the sole reason that the rule on amusements interfered with their liberty and pleasure, then he would have been justified in concluding that they were influenced in their refusal, not by the angel of conscientiousness, but by the devil of selfishness. But we fear that the Doctor did not labor with them in the manner suggested.

In this connection the following from the *Epworth Herald* of July 12, 1902, will prove interesting:

"THE AMUSEMENT BAR."

"One of the chief arguments against the Methodist Episcopal prohibition of worldly amusements is, that

it keeps thousands of young people out of our Church. These young Christians, we are told, go into other Churches which are more liberal in their views on the amusement question. We had an interesting conversation the other day with the pastor of a Congregationalist Church. He told of a very precious revival which had visited his Church during last winter. Among those who decided to begin the Christian life were a number of young women. At the close of the special meeting the question of uniting with the Church came up. It was expected that these young people would at once come into the fellowship of the Church. But, to the surprise of the pastor, they demurred.

"In explanation of their decision they declared that they had decided to remain outside the Church because of the amusement question. 'We like to play cards and dance,' they said, 'and are not ready to give them up. We know, of course, that there are no specific rules in the Congregationalist Church against these things. *But we know they are not right. No member of the Church should indulge in them. If we join the Church, our conscience will compel us to give them up.* That we are not ready to do, and so we will stay outside.'

"We will agree that some persons are kept out of the Methodist Episcopal Church by the Methodist Episcopal law on the amusement question. But if these persons would tell the exact truth it would be found that most of them remain out of the Church because of their love of worldly amusements, and not because of any law against them. They see that a worldly life and Church membership are incompatible, and that if

they go into the Church it means the surrender of the card-table and the theater.

"But suppose the abolition of our disciplinary prohibition should result in an addition of 500,000 dancing, card-playing, theater-going, worldly-minded members within one year, how much would we really gain?"

And here is a letter from a faithful pastor in one of our great Western mining camps,—a cultured, earnest man, a graduate of one of our universities, and also of a Methodist theological school,—here is what he thinks about the practical workings of the rule:

"WARDNER, IDAHO, October 20, 1903.

"Regarding the advisability of expunging Paragraph 248 of our Discipline, I have this to say: It has been a great protection to my work here in a mining camp. Amid influences that favor the dance, the card-parties, and the theater, many professed Christians have insisted on being permitted this indulgence while members of Church. I have insisted upon obeying the Discipline for conscience' sake. As a result the Church has been kept free from this spiritual blight. It is true that many, on account of our attitude, have united with other Churches; but mark the result: The pastors of those Churches which permitted their members to indulge in these worldly pleasures have resigned, and their churches are empty. Their membership, devoid of spiritual power, has been

absorbed by worldliness; the prayer-meeting has been superseded by the dance, and the theater preferred above the preached Word. I am thankful for this paragraph in our Discipline which so ably assists me in the fight against the blighting forces of worldliness.

"D. W. RAINES, *Pastor M. E. Church.*"

The Doctor has rightly named the rule. It is a "winnowing fan," and while it may now and then winnow "out and away from us" a few grains of wheat, it is evident that it also winnows "out and away from us" a vast amount of chaff.

CHAPTER IX.

"A DEAD LETTER."

It is confidently asserted by the "repealers," that the regulation on amusements is "a dead letter;" that "it can not be enforced," and therefore it should no longer disfigure our ecclesiastical statute-book. They mean, of course, that it is not "judicially" enforced. Just at this point we may be pardoned if we indulge in a few very plain words:

First. It has probably been observed, by even the most rabid "repealer," that in the Methodist Episcopal Church there is very little enforcement of any rule whatsoever by judicial process. Very few pastors ever indulge in the luxury of a Church trial, and the Discipline does not require that they should except in cases where this method of treatment is absolutely unavoidable.

Every pastor, as an administrator of discipline, is clothed with discretionary power, and

it is unadulterated nonsense for any one to say that in the matter of the amusement clause this discretionary power is taken away. And when some distinguished representative of the "repealers" shouts, "How many times has this regulation on amusements been enforced?" we frankly admit that there have been very few cases of judicial enforcement. But then we may be pardoned if we shout back to the aforesaid "repealer," something like this:

"My distinguished friend, you who think that the 'amusement clause' in Paragraph 248 of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church ought to be repealed because of its non-enforcement, will you kindly look your camp over and give us the names of the pastors who, during the past year, have enforced, by regular judicial process, the following items under the same prohibitory rule in Paragraph 248: 'Neglect of duties of any kind,' 'imprudent conduct,' 'the buying, selling, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage,' 'signing petitions in favor of granting license for the sale of intoxicating liquors,' 'becoming bondsmen for persons engaged in such

traffic,' 'renting property as a place in or on which to manufacture or sell intoxicating liquors,' 'or disobedience to the order and Discipline of the Church?'

"And will you kindly find out how many have tried and expelled members who have been guilty as indicated in Paragraph 249?

"And while you are at it, will you give me the names of those who have expelled any members for sowing dissension, as described in Paragraph 250, 'by inveighing against either our doctrines or Discipline?'"

No one will question the statement that these rules have been violated in thousands of instances, and yet the number of "trials" for these offenses, during the past year, in the entire Methodist Episcopal Church, can, in all probability, be counted on the fingers of your two hands!

Second. If, however, the rule on amusements has been violated oftener than any other, and has not been judicially enforced as often as it should have been, then I unhesitatingly declare that the responsibility for non-enforcement rests chiefly upon the camp of the "repealers," for they not

only will not enforce it themselves, but block the way to its enforcement by others by inveighing against the law, and by casting ridicule upon those who favor the law and desire to enforce it.

This is no empty assertion. Here is some of the evidence:

"I was much pleased to hear Bishop Foss disparage the making of lists. He and I were members of the same General Conference in 1872, which added to the simple rule of John Wesley a partial, unsatisfactory, and ignored list. I have the happiness to know that I voted against it."—Dr. Buckley, at the Second Ecumenical Conference, Washington, D. C., 1891.

"I would have no long black list of forbidden amusements. No such list can possibly be complete for every time and place. Any such list is quite likely to be unwise, being made by persons at the furthest remove from those for whose guidance it is designed."—Bishop Foss, at the Second Ecumenical Conference, in an address delivered October 19, 1891.

"This legislation is to be objected to because, on account of its failure to carry with it the convictions of many who are in the membership of the Church, it is practically a dead letter, and as a measure of discipline can not be enforced."—Dr. Mains in the *Methodist Review*, 1892.

"For good or evil, in other than strictly moral matters, the day of discipline is done. Fussy moral interference and official spiritual guidance are becoming increasingly offensive and insufferable."

"We have legislation which is not executed, which

every one knows is not executed, which can not be executed; and any youthful minister, in the stage of disciplinary rigor and vigor, who should insist on executing it, unless he picked out a very small man for practice, would get a back seat for his pains."—Dr. Borden P. Bowne, in the *Review*, 1898.

Now, these sample expressions were not uttered in a corner, but on a platform facing the representatives of worldwide Methodism, and through the one Methodist magazine which every Methodist Episcopal preacher is supposed to take and read.

Now, consider their effect upon the average Methodist preacher. Dr. Buckley, a prince among parliamentarians and platform orators, a mighty man in the pulpit, and a king among religious editors, publicly condemns the law, and is happy to know that he voted against it. Surely nobody would have the temerity to attempt the enforcement of any law that is so bad that Dr. Buckley is happy every time he remembers that he voted against it!

And Bishop Foss, wise and good and great, "would have no long black list of forbidden amusements," and therefore any Methodist

preacher who covets a good appointment will be careful how he runs counter to the opinion of a bishop by enforcing the law against any of the amusements indicated in that "long black list" which the bishop has no use for.

And Dr. Mains, before his election to his present high position, one of the foremost pastors of Methodism, says the rule is a "dead letter," and declares that it "can not be enforced." If the Doctor is right—and he sometimes is—then, when he says the law "can not be enforced," does n't that settle the matter? Where is the Methodist preacher that cares to attempt an impossibility?

But if any silly Methodist preacher, full of the spirit of "fussy moral interference," in spite of what has been said by Dr. Buckley and Bishop Foss and Dr. Mains, still insists on bringing his card-playing, dancing, theater-going members to account, let him beware; for Dr. Borden P. Bowne, the oracular philosopher of Methodism, with his gold-mounted javelin of sarcasm, is after him, and will surely run him into "a back seat for his pains," especially if he is a very "youth-

ful minister," and happens to be "in the stage of disciplinary rigor and vigor!"

But this is not all. It ought to be apparent to any one who has the ability to think twice in twenty-four hours that the effect of such statements from men high up on the top seats of Methodism will be to promote a spirit of utter contempt and disregard for Methodist law and discipline; and that not only among the preachers, but among the membership. It grieves us to say this, or rather it grieves us that an occasion has arisen that makes it necessary to say such things of our truly great men; but in these times, with the spirit of lawlessness everywhere manifest, anything that savors of an apology for such lawlessness, or that is calculated to promote it, should be met, not with mincing timid protest, but with stern denunciation.

If the law as it is can not be enforced by judicial process, it is because Dr. Buckley, and Bishop Foss, and Dr. Mains, and Dr. Bowne, and others like them, in their mistaken zeal for a soft-and-easy, sugar-coated, gumdrop sort of discipline, have stimulated resistance to the law, and have

thus put themselves on friendly terms with the lawbreakers.

But if the law as it is can not be enforced; if we can not by judicial process try and expel a theater-going, card-playing Methodist now,—then some of us would like to know how it can be done under the General Rule should the amusement clause in Paragraph 248 be repealed? As a matter of fact it could not be done, and it is evident that the “repealers” do not care to have it done; for has not Dr. Bowne already put himself on record as favoring the very things that are now prohibited? Only he expects the theater to put up a “clean play” when he attends, and when he dances and plays cards it must always be in “reputable society.”

But now, even admitting that the law on amusements can not be judicially enforced, is it therefore a “dead letter?” We unhesitatingly answer that it is not.

Law, considered as an authoritative rule of conduct, commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong, is, by reason of its inherent moral quality, possessed of the power of self-en-

forcement *with all who do not belong to the lawless class.*

Take, for instance, the law against murder. That law is defied in every section of our country by many people of a fair degree of respectability who participate in the lynchings that have become so common and are a disgrace to our Christian civilization.

In how many instances during the last year has the law against murder been enforced in the case of those who attended these murder entertainments and participated in the bloody sport in "reputable society?" But since the lynchers are not punished, are we therefore to conclude that the law is a "dead letter?"

It is safe to assume that, with nine out of every ten in our Methodist membership, our law on amusements is faithfully observed, and is therefore not a "dead letter."

But what is it, after all, that is contemplated by our law on amusements? Is it not the putting out of the Church, or the keeping out of the Church that which threatens the moral safety and spiritual power of the same? If, therefore, the

law is moderately successful in doing this without judicial process, it is not a "dead letter," and that it does this the most eminent "repealers" have already, perhaps unwittingly, admitted. Who has not heard their mournful complaint that the rule on amusements *sends* many good dancers (beg pardon)—good Methodists *out of the Church*, and *keeps* many good card-players (beg pardon again)—good people *out of the Church*, who would otherwise come in?

Dr. Mains admits that the law is enforced—non-judicially—when he declares that it kept out three young persons during his Brooklyn pastorate.

And, recently, one high up in the official third-heaven of the Church ecclesiastical, and one who stands in the forefront of the forces of the "repealers," related to me how a certain bishop had said to him that this rule had lost to our Church in ten years "more than twenty-five thousand bright young people." No wonder Dr. Mains calls this amusement rule a "winnowing-fan." What a vast amount of trouble it has saved us from? What a tremendous undertaking to

put twenty-five thousand card-players out of the Church by judicial process! But we didn't have to do it. The "amusement law"—the winnowing-fan"—did it, or saved us the trouble of doing it. A law that can keep twenty-five thousand card-playing, dancing, theater-going people out of the Church in ten years is not a "dead letter."

CHAPTER X.

“BLACK-LIST OF FORBIDDEN AMUSEMENTS.”

THE advocates of repeal are perfectly willing to permit the General Rule on amusements to remain where it is—a very sensible position to take, in view of the fact that it is a part of the constitution of the Church that can never be removed; but they are decidedly averse to having a “black-list of forbidden amusements” dragged from under the cover of that rule and placed over in the penal code. But if we must have a list, they declare that it ought to be a complete one, and not an “imperfect” and “partial” one, such as we have in Paragraph 248! As the list now is, there is great danger that some good people will indulge in something that is as bad as any of the things forbidden in the list!

Dr. Buckley is greatly exercised over this defect, and to show how dangerous it is he tells of

a good, pious Sunday-school superintendent who went to witness a prize-fight on Coney Island, and when his pastor remonstrated with him "he pointed to the list, and said it was not there!" If that superintendent is equally brilliant in his exposition of the Decalogue, the boys in his Sunday-school will be heard from some day—in the prize-ring—perhaps. Dr. Neely ought to hunt up that man, and get some pointers for the *Journal*.

Several of the speakers at the last General Conference seemed to side with Dr. Buckley and his Sunday-school superintendent, and were equally unable to find anything in Paragraph 248 except what was expressly named. The significant clause with which the section on amusements in Paragraph 248 closes—namely, "or taking such other amusements as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency"—was evidently without meaning to them. They could find nothing in that to keep them away from even worse places than the theater and the ballroom! Dr. Buckley said:

"There is nothing in the list to prohibit the bil-

liard saloons. . . . There is nothing against prize-fights. There is nothing against the opera. Now observe, the text of the operas is on the average worse than the text of the ordinary drama."

It is true, as the Doctor says, that there is nothing in the "list," that is to say, nothing specifically naming the opera and many other worldly amusements, but will he contend that because they are not in the "list," they are, therefore, not in the law?" As well might he contend that because 39 times 476 is not in the multiplication table, therefore it is not in the rule.

If the Doctor can not get enough light from the clause, "or taking such other amusements as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency," to keep him and his good superintendent of Coney Island fame away from the prize-ring, how much more light would he be likely to get from the General Rule?

But there is another thing that must not be forgotten; the recommendation of the "repealers" to put this same "imperfect," "partial" "black-list" over in the Chapter of Advices!

Yes, here is the language of the report which

they brought in at the last General Conference, 1900:

"We recommend that the following be inserted as an additional section in Chapter III of the Discipline, now called Special Advices: Our Church has from the beginning of its history insisted that 'dancing, playing at games of chance, attending theaters, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools' and other amusements which can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus, are perilous to the spiritual life and influence of the members of our Church and enervating to the spiritual power of the Church in the great work of saving souls."

Now, suppose the change here suggested had taken place at the Chicago General Conference, and Dr. Buckley had gone home happy—yes, twice happy—happy in the remembrance that he voted against the "black-list" in 1872, and that he helped to remove it in 1900, and suppose that he had called in the Coney Island superintendent to give him the full benefit of the new legislation, telling him that the "black-list" of Paragraph 248 had been removed,—might not that pious lover of the prize-ring have said: "I rejoice that the old 'black-list' has been wiped from the fair pages of our now glorious Discipline, and that I can now,

not only go to the prize-fight, but to the theater, and the dance, and—" But at this point he is interrupted by the Doctor, and informed that it was not the intention of the "repealers" to grant any such privilege, and that the same "black-list" has been transferred bodily to the Chapter on Advices, and is still in the Discipline, in the way of *advice*, and as a reminder of the "historic attitude of the Church."

Imagine the disgust of this good man as he listens to the Doctor's words. Still there is a ray of hope as he says:

"So the list is still in the Discipline, is it?"

"Yes," replies the Doctor, "in the Chapter on Advices."

"But," says the superintendent, "is that list as binding in this Chapter on Advices as it was before?"

"That is the opinion of Ex-Governor Pattison," replies the Doctor.

For a few moments the face of the good superintendent is clouded with gloom, but suddenly he asks:

"Was anything *added* to the 'list?' "

"Nothing," says the Doctor. "It is just as it was."

Then does the good man rejoice and rub his hands together gleefully as he says:

"Well, Doctor, I had hoped for something better; but I have no complaint to make, for I can still go to see a prize-fight in Coney Island, for that is not in the 'list;' and if I should take a notion to go to the theater, or in any other way disregard the 'advice,' I am free to do so *if my conscience does not condemn me!*"

This is a fair presentation of the situation in which we would have been placed had the last General Conference adopted the majority report. If the list is imperfect where it is, it would be imperfect in the Chapter on Advices. If it is misleading now, it would be equally misleading anywhere else in the Discipline.

CHAPTER XI.

A MARVELOUS AMENDMENT.

THERE was one man in the General Conference of 1900, however, who had the ability to devise, and the courage to propose, a brilliant scheme for the relief of Dr. Buckley and others who felt so badly because of the imperfection of the amusement "list."

Here it is as you will find it in the *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 28, 1900:

"F. A. Arter.—I want to offer an amendment: "To amend by inserting the following after the words "or patronizing dancing schools," opera, grand opera, living pictures, tableaux, charades, prize-fights, bull-fights, dog-fights, cock-fights, yachting, roller-skating, football, baseball, curling, and playing the following games: backgammon, billiards, checkers, chess, dice, croquet, polo, pool, golf, lawn-tennis, cricket, one o'cat, two o'cat, shinney, lacrosse, old sow, pillow, Denmark, blindman's buff, prison goal, tug of war, crokinole, mattadore, raffling, crap-shooting, pitching quoits, archery, tenpins, shuffle-board, bicycling, grab-bag, basketball, house-ball, hand-up, baltie collie, crack-about, over the barn, house over or hally over, corner-ball, black-

baby, marbles, game of authors, and that dangerous game of chance of casting lots for seats of General Conference delegates.’”

For some reason Brother Arter's amendment did not meet with very hearty approval, and was ultimately lost, but not till it had provoked some tremendous outbursts from that many-mouthed vociferous body. It may have been a great disappointment to Brother Arter; but he, or his friends, may have another chance, and in the meantime he and they might look over the following:

PARABLE.

Once upon a time, in a Western legislature, the Committee on Public Safety brought in a report in which it was recommended that Section 248 of the Code be repealed, or put in the Chapter on Advices. The objectionable clause in said section was as follows:

“And it shall be the duty of all good citizens to hunt down, kill, cause to perish, and destroy the bear, the mountain lion, the panther, the wolf, and the lynx, and such other animals, birds, insects, or reptiles, as are obviously of a dangerous or destructive character.”

Quite a number of speeches were made in favor of this recommendation to repeal.

One very distinguished member of the body argued that if the law was enforced, and the bears were all killed, every bear-hunter in the country would leave and go elsewhere, and other bear-hunters would be deterred from coming in, and thus the State would lose some of "the most valuable material" for citizenship.

Another claimed that the law was unscriptural, and declared that, according to the Bible, the time would come when :

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

He contended that the law as it stood was clearly an attempt to frustrate the plans of Providence; for was it not clear that if the bears were all killed there would n't be any to feed with a cow, and if the mountain lions were exterminated it would be impossible for one of them to eat straw with an ox. He said, however, that he

would not insist on that last item, for he was not quite sure that the mountain-lion was the one referred to in the words just quoted.

Another thought every man, especially if he was young, should be permitted to do as he pleased; for he had taught school long enough to find out that there was a time in every young man's life when he objected to any law or regulation which did not commend itself to his juvenile judgment, and to his mind it was unfair to the average young man to make him kill a bear if he did n't want to.

Another claimed that the law was unconstitutional; for every one was aware that there was a General Law in the constitution which provided that "every citizen must contribute to the public safety in every way possible," and it was further provided that this General Law should never be added to nor altered in any way, and it was evident that this specific statute which had been enacted by a former legislature that was somewhat lacking in wisdom, was not of the nature of a construction of the General Law, but was an addition thereto, and was therefore directly

contrary to that section of the constitution which forbids any change.

Another vehemently declared that it was beneath the dignity of the State to go before the world with any such "petty legislation on its statute-books."

And still another claimed that the list was imperfect and incomplete, and told of a neighbor of his, an excellent man, a justice of the peace and very wise in the law, who permitted a wild-cat to carry off one of his lambs only a short time before, and when asked why he did n't shoot the beast, he took down the Code, pointed to the statute and said, "The wild-cat is n't in it."

This was a stunner, and it was evident that something would have to be done right away, or the law would go by the board.

Then it was that a very grave and earnest man, and pious withal, came forward and said:

"Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment which I wish to offer. I move to amend Section 248 by inserting the following after the word 'lynx.'—wildcat, bobcat, polecat, weasel, mink, raccoon, woodchuck, rattlesnake, woodtick, rat,

snapping-turtle, eagle, skunk, flea, muskrat, scorpion, rabbit, jack-rabbit, owl, mouse, bed-bug—”

But he got no further for the house broke into a thunderous roar in the midst of which Barney O'Hagan got the floor and, after quiet was restored, said:

“Misther Chairman: Oi wud not for a moment think of matchin' meself wid ony av the foine spakers that has already charmed us wid their iloquence. But the amindment that has jist been prasinted be the honorable gintleman over there on the left, is totally uncalled for accordin' to the notion of Barney O'Hagan.

“To me own way of thinkin' the law is plain enough as it is. It names four or five wild bastes that iverybody knows to be dangerous, and then adds that any other dangerous animals shall be trated the same way. If me honorable friend that thinks the list is not complate wull only scratch his head till he gits the blood to circulatin' around his thinkin' machine, and will once more examine the statute that he is afther puttin' out, and that me other friend here wants to put

his amindment to, he will see that, while there are only a few wild animals named in the list, still ivery other wild baste is included in the law. So if we lave the law jist as it is, then while some of us is afther the bear, an' the wolf, an' the mountain-lion, there is nothin' in the law to pravint the mover av that illigant amindment from goin' afther a woodchuck, killin' a rattlesnake, or scalpin' a bedbug!"

The amendment was laid on the table, and the motion to repeal Section 248 was lost by a vote of 327 to 282.

CHAPTER XII.

SHALL WE ORDER A RETREAT?

IF the "amusement clause" of Paragraph 248 commended and commanded indulgence in the amusements there enumerated on pain of trial and expulsion, then we would certainly do well to "take the back-track." But since it unequivocally condemns a class of amusements which are in their nature or tendency manifestly pernicious, specifically names a few of the most popular and hurtful of this evil class, and provides for the judicial enforcement of the law in the case of the finally incorrigible, it is singular indeed that any of our great and honored leaders should advise a retreat!

But at the General Conference of 1900, Dr. Bashford, after declaring that the enactment of the "amusement clause" was a mistake, said:

"If we made a mistake then, let us be brave enough and honest enough to correct that mistake at this time."

And Dr. Mains, in his vigorous speech on the same occasion, also recommended retreat, in the following words:

"Let us do the manly, the heroic thing as a Church, as would be justly required of an individual under like circumstances. Let us do the manly thing of backing straight away from this mistake."

In his *Review* article of 1892 the Doctor admits that "it is not an easy thing for a great Church, before the eyes of all the world, to take the back-track for the undoing of its former work."

Most assuredly it will not be an easy thing for the great Methodist Episcopal Church to take the "back-track" in this particular case; for in so doing she will justly incur the displeasure of very many of her most valuable members.

No ingenious plea based on expediency, no amount of word-juggling on the part of the "repealers," can make it appear that the removal of the amusement clause from Paragraph 248 is anything short of a concession to the world, and a concession, too, that is of the nature of a compromise with and a surrender to the devil.

As the law now stands it is a clear, sweeping, emphatic condemnation of all such amusements "as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency."

Repeal the law, and you remove the condemnation!

From this conclusion there is absolutely no escape.

To repeal the law, and then put a little note away off in some remote corner of the Discipline commendatory of "the historic attitude of the Church," may be entirely satisfactory to the "repealers," and would most certainly be satisfactory to the "world, the flesh, and the devil," but such a course, whatever the motive that prompts it, will most certainly invite the contempt of very many, both in and out of the Church, who will regard it as a cowardly concession to the world for the sake of members and money!

And this proposed *retreat* is vociferously recommended as the "manly," "honest," "heroic," thing for the Church to do!

"Manly" for the great Methodist Episcopal

Church to "back down" before the persistent demands of the lovers of worldly amusements and their apologists!

"Honest," to change the present administrative attitude of the Church from condemnation to tacit approval of worldly amusements, when the great body of our present membership entered the Church since the enactment of the amusement law, and with the understanding that it expressed the fixed and settled sentiment and policy of the Church!

"Heroic," to repeal the "amusement clause!" to "back straight away" from the position we have held for more than thirty years! to "take the back track" towards humiliation and defeat! to surrender!

It is refreshing to turn away from this sort of "manliness," "honesty," and "heroism," and contemplate something more in harmony with Methodist traditions and usages.

At the annual banquet of the Chicago Methodist Social Union given at the Auditorium Hotel, March 12, 1903, Governor Mickey, of Nebraska, delivered an address on "Methodism and the

Twentieth-century Demands," in which, among other good things, he said:

"If we neglect to teach our children the Word of God, if we set them a bad example in wicked things, like balls and cards and theaters, we will have to meet these things on the day of judgment."

"All my life I have taught my children that it is wrong to dance and play cards and go to theaters. Not so much is the act itself wrong, but it might lead them into associations that might ruin them. . . . How could I, then, when I got to be governor of Nebraska, and they wanted to give an inaugural ball, go back on those principles which I had taught my children, and which I had prayed over with them many a night? When the delegation came to me I said, 'No, I can't do it;' and I tell you now I had rather lose a big farm than do it now. . . . I only did what I had to do, what any honest Methodist would have done. . . . I thought of my wife; and suppose I had been weak and said, 'Well, if it is the custom to have a ball, go ahead and I will be there,' I should have had to take my wife; and do you suppose I should have been unmanly enough to have subjected her to that disgrace?"

The above is taken from the report given in the *Central Christian Advocate*, which states that the address was received with warm demonstrations of approval.

The *Northwestern Christian Advocate* in its

report of the banquet states that, at the conclusion of Governor Mickey's address, Mr. Allan T. Gilbert, president of the Social Union, said:

"After this address by Governor Mickey, I do not believe there are any preachers here who will be afraid to lift up their voices against the card-table, the theater, and the dance. And let it be remembered that not only the governor of Nebraska, but also the governor of Illinois would not permit an inaugural ball to be given in his honor."

All honor to Governor John H. Mickey, of Nebraska, and Governor Richard Yates, of Illinois, and President Allan T. Gilbert, of the Chicago Social Union. And all honor to the great army of heroic Methodists who stand with them on the platform of unswerving loyalty to these principles. One other remark from Governor Mickey's address is worthy of the most profound consideration of every member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and especially of that select few who shall represent us in the next General Conference. After telling of his refusal to permit an inaugural ball, he makes this significant statement:

"I might say that I have had more commendation from men out of the Church than I have had from

those in it. They have said that I did right. That is the way the world thinks of this question. You men of the Church must grapple with these problems."

Men of the world have a feeling of profound respect for consistency, and they honor the men and women who bravely stand by their convictions. But what will be the measure of their contempt for us if we "take the back-track" from our high position on a great moral question?

A WORD AT THE END.

WITH all due regard for the eminent men whose opinions on the amusement question we have been compelled to combat in the foregoing chapters, we now declare that it is our deliberate conviction that if the General Conference accedes to their demands and repeals the amusement clause in Paragraph 248, or removes it to the Chapter on "Advices," we may confidently expect the following disastrous results:

Bad people will openly rejoice.

Many good people will secretly mourn.

Worldliness will run high.

Spirituality will run low.

Dancing, card-playing, and theater-going will increase.

Some of our "liberal" preachers will openly indulge.

"Discipline" will exist only in name.

The best we can do will be to point to our "historic attitude!" More of the frivolous and worldly may be attracted to us, and many of our best people will depart from us.

Matt. xii, 45.

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The impending peril

